

Jack Thayer

A HISTORY
of the
MECHANICS EDUCATIONAL
SOCIETY OF AMERICA
IN DETROIT
FROM ITS INCEPTION
IN 1933 THROUGH 1937

HARRY DAHLHEIMER

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PREFACE

The appearance of the Mechanics Educational Society of America in the Detroit area in 1933 is only one aspect of a much larger movement which began in the 1930's. This larger movement - the modern labor movement - is subject to many and varied interpretations, but few will deny its importance as a social and economic phenomenon of modern America. In light of the significance of the movement, surprisingly little has been done in the way of tracing its origin or early development, and this want is singularly conspicuous in metropolitan Detroit, a center of the movement. It was in awareness of the dearth of material dealing specifically with this phase of Detroit's history that this study was undertaken.

In hope of partly filling this void in local knowledge, I proffer the case history of the M.E.S.A. - the first union to effectively establish itself in what had been traditionally an open shop stronghold, Detroit's mass production automobile industry. In its evolution, this union typified many of the elements of the larger movement, and prophesied others; but at the same time, it maintained an uniqueness of character of itself noteworthy. Not that the union's growth was completely rational, or carefully planned; it was not. I submit, however, that there is discernible a significant pattern to the events which characterize the M.E.S.A.'s early history. This significance, which seems to me especially tangible in terms of the subsequent development of the labor movement, has been largely overlooked heretofore.

In the preparation of this study, I have, of necessity, relied almost entirely upon primary sources. Most of the material used has been obtained from newspapers, labor papers, magazines, handbills, broadsides, pamphlets, manuscripts. Another important source has been interviews with persons who were eyewitnesses to, or participants in, the events described. It is perhaps superfluous to suggest that, as regards objectivity, the study is subject to the limitations which all such accounts of contemporary events must be.

I gratefully acknowledge the tremendous debt incurred to Mr. Joe Brown for the time and help he has patiently given, and for making available to me his excellent collection of contemporary documents relating to the labor movement. The assistance of Mr. Brown, who, as a reporter for the Federated Press, gained a remarkable first hand acquaintanceship with labor events in the decade of the 1930's, has been invaluable.

I wish also to thank Mr. Matthew Smith, who has been General Secretary of the M.E.S.A., and its leading spirit since its inception, and Miss Elizabeth McCracken, Mr. Smith's private secretary, for the time and information which they have generously given.

I also express my deepest gratitude to my wife, without whose constant help the study might never have been completed, and to Mr. Joe L. Norris of the History Department of Wayne University, for his many valuable suggestions and criticisms.

H. D.

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CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THE M. E. S. A.

As late as 1933, the automobile industry in Detroit was an open shop industry. Indeed, the whole auto industry, from the time it had become a large scale business, had been marked by a conspicuous absence of effectively organized labor groups. There were many reasons for this. First of all, auto workers were paid comparatively high wages, and this, combined with the seasonal character of their work, made them singularly difficult to organize. Unions are not readily built among men who are working long hours at reasonable rates of pay; on the other hand, they can hardly be built among the unemployed. The inclusion in the industry's labor force of a number of transient workers, and others who, for one reason or another, considered their jobs as only temporary, further impeded the formation of unions. A final factor was, undoubtedly, the vigorous efforts of the auto manufacturers themselves to keep the industry non-unionized.

There were even groups within the body of labor itself which were either opposed to, or very tepidly in favor of, the organization of workers for collective bargaining. Prominent among these groups were the tool and die makers.

These craftsmen were the most highly skilled workers in the auto industry. Technological developments in the tool and die industry had made possible the rapid production of a large variety of complicated draw dies. As a result, engineers were able to design automobile bodies with curved panels and deep drawn fenders that could be manufactured on a mass production basis, with resultant economies - and when automobile manufacturers began to offer a variety of body types, tools and dies were even more in demand.

Accordingly, tool and die maker's wages were high. Their work was seasonal (most of them were employed only seven or eight months out of the year), but they made enough when they worked to enable them to maintain a rather high standard of living. While their average hourly earnings were only seventy-five or eighty cents an hour, many of them worked eighty or ninety hours a week during rush periods. Because of their liberal earnings,

their high degree of skill and training, and the individualistic nature of their work, the tool and die workers became known as the "aristocracy of labor." Accordingly, they had difficulty in feeling, and indeed were reluctant to admit, either identity, or common economic interest, with the great mass of workers.

However, the great business depression which followed the panic in 1929 was very serious in Detroit. The "Mayor's Unemployment Committee Report," based on a survey of fourteen hundred representative families, revealed that the average hourly wage of those interviewed who were employed dropped 34 per cent from 1929 to 1932, and the median of family income dropped 67 per cent in the same period.¹

As a group, the tool and die makers were especially hard hit in the early years of the depression. Because a long period of apprenticeship is required in the tool and die trade, most of the workers were middle aged men, with families dependent on them. Since they were accustomed to high wages, many of them were, at this time, buying homes and automobiles, which suddenly began to be repossessed in alarming numbers.²

Wages dropped astonishingly.³ In fact, in a sense, wages began to disappear. Increasingly, they were replaced by the contract system - a device which forced wage rates so low that skilled tool and die workers frequently worked for forty or fifty cents an hour, and occasionally for as little as twenty cents an hour.⁴ The contract system worked like this: As a jobbing shop received tool and die work from an automobile company, the work was divided into various operations, and when unemployed tool and die makers applied for jobs, they were invited to bid for the various parcels of work. The bids were made in open competition. Each tool maker bid a certain number of hour's pay for each job, with the lowest bidder getting the job. The inevitable result was that, before long, some men were bidding twenty hour's pay for jobs that actually took thirty-five or forty hours to do - just to get the work. In a short time, wages were driven unbearably low.

A large number of tool and die makers did not actually work in the automotive plants but in the jobbing shops which contracted work with the large automobile manufacturers. Before seniority came to be an important consideration, many of these men shifted back and forth between the auto plants and the jobbing shops, whenever they thought they could improve their lot. This mobility was significant, for as the tool and die workers circulated from one shop to another in search of employment, they came to know each other well. In February of 1933, a small group of them formed a social organization, whose declared purpose was educational.⁵ They held their meetings in Schiller Hall, at Mack and Gratiot. These meetings were conducted in the form of a workshop, intend-

ed to improve the skill of members, and keep them technologically up-to-date. Experts in tool and die work were invited to attend, and technical problems were worked out on the blackboard. Named the Mechanics Educational Society of America, this organization appealed to the craft conscious tool and die men. Dues were twenty-five cents per month for the men who were employed, but there was no charge for those without jobs.

It seems highly probable that many of the early members of the society would not have joined if they had known they were joining what was to become a union.⁶ Some of the men in the group had, however, been members of the International Association of Machinists, and Matthew Smith, a charter member who was to later become the leading figure of the M.E.S.A., had a broad background of experience in labor unions in England.

It was but a simple step, obviously, for this organization to become a union. The National Industrial Recovery Act in June, 1933, which, under Clause 7A, provided that employees be allowed to join unions of their own choosing without fear of discrimination, had a salutary effect on the organization of labor throughout the nation. It was an important consideration to the members of the M.E.S.A. when they decided, in July, 1933, to use their organization as an instrument for organizing the tool and die workers. The members of the Society planned a picnic to be held the second week in July, and invited all the tool and die makers. No mention of the possibility of organizing a union was included in the invitations. But once the picnic began, short speeches were delivered, which were followed by a discussion of common problems and grievances.⁷ A meeting was arranged for the following week at Schiller Hall. At this meeting, which was attended by about seventy tool and die men, the general form which the organization would take was discussed, and a committee was elected to draft tentative by-laws. Fifteen dollars was collected (the cost of incorporating under Michigan law), subscribed by the few present who had jobs. A propaganda meeting was arranged to take place at the Northern High School, a few days later. At this meeting, Judge Edward J. Jeffries, who had been invited to speak, urged the five hundred men present to join the union.⁸ When the meeting closed, many new members were signed up, but only the men who had jobs were required to pay the twenty-five cents dues.⁹

Later, committees were elected and sent to Flint and Pontiac, to organize the tool and die workers there. Matthew Smith headed the committee sent to Flint. He got a job at Chevrolet, and with the help of Lowell Hole and Jack Levy, began recruiting fellow tool and die men. The response to these efforts in Flint was enthusiastic. In less than three months, 90 per cent of the tool and die workers employed directly or indirectly by the General Motors

Corporation in Flint were members of the union.

The Flint local elected an executive committee with Matthew Smith as chairman. Early in September, 1933, the committee presented demands to the plant managers of Buick, Chevrolet, and A C Spark Plug, calling for a wage raise from approximately eighty cents an hour to a dollar fifty cents an hour, a thirty-seven-and-a-half hour work week, and no Saturday or Sunday work. Of the three companies, only Chevrolet arranged for a conference with the M.E.S.A. representatives. The tool and die workers promptly established the five day week by the simple expedient of not reporting for work on Saturday or Sunday.¹⁰ M.E.S.A. members watched the gates to make sure that the ban was enforced.

A strike vote was taken, and the tool and die men voted to strike if their demands were not met. Negotiations were carried on from September 15 to September 21. Several conferences were held with Mr. William Knudsen, president of Chevrolet, but Mr. Knudsen refused any change in wage rates, and insisted that the men resume Saturday work immediately. M.E.S.A. representatives then cut their wage demand to one dollar an hour, and Mr. Knudsen seemed receptive to this compromise offer. But at the September 21st meeting, it was apparent that something had changed his attitude, for his conciliatory manner disappeared, and he refused point blank to consider any wage increase whatever.¹¹

That night, at a mass meeting, M.E.S.A. members voted to carry out their strike threat, and the next day, the tool and die men walked out in every General Motor's plant in Flint.¹² Several days later, the Flint committee sent an urgent appeal to the Detroit and Pontiac locals, asking them to strike in sympathy. When it became apparent that tool and die work was being sent from the struck plants in Flint to Detroit, the Detroit local voted to join the walkout, and was followed the next day by the Pontiac local.¹³ By September 26, the entire M.E.S.A. membership was on strike.¹⁴ The action hereafter centers in Detroit.

NOTES

1. "Mayor's Unemployment Committee Report," Detroit, 1932 (MS in possession of Mr. Joe Brown), p. 12. This is the official report of the Committee appointed by Mayor Frank Murphy and is based on interviews with fourteen hundred families, selected in a manner to purportedly give a reasonably accurate cross section of the city as a whole.

2. Preliminary Report on the Study of Regularization of Employment and Improvement of Labor Conditions in the Automobile Industry (Washington: NRA Research and Planning Division, January 23, 1935). Exhibit 17, Appendix B of this report, shows that of 105 tool and die makers who returned questionnaires, twenty-one had lost their homes, and sixteen had lost automobiles.

3. See appendix A for table of comparative wages.

4. A Federated Press clippingsheet, November 11, 1932, carried a story of a tool maker who bid twenty dollars for a job which took him eighty-nine hours to do. Two dollars was deducted from his pay for broken tools, leaving him eighteen dollars, or approximately twenty cents an hour.

5. Letter from Matthew Smith to Joe Brown, December, 1934. (MS in possession of Mr. Joe Brown.)

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Interview with Matthew Smith, April 17, 1949.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. At this time, the M.E.S.A. was composed of 10,500 members: the Flint local had 3,000, Detroit, 7,000, and Pontiac, 500. Many new members came in as soon as the strike began, however. Letter from Smith to Brown, December, 1934.

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CHAPTER II

THE 1933 STRIKE

The automobile industry found itself in an astonishing state of affairs. Almost all the tool and die workers in the Detroit-Flint-Pontiac area were on strike. Nearly one hundred shops were closed, chiefly job shops, and many others were seriously hampered by the walkout. Every automobile factory in the Detroit metropolitan area was before long being picketed, except the Ford Motor Company and Graham Paige.¹ Even more amazing was the fact that this strike, which was to become the closest thing to a general strike that has ever taken place in the auto industry, was being conducted by a union which was almost totally without funds and which seven months earlier had been non-existent.

The tool and die men expected a battle - and their expectations were quickly realized. The work stoppage provoked attack from many sides, and a number of powerful forces were actively in opposition to the strike. The Employers' Association of Detroit, headed by Chester M. Culver and backed by the Michigan Manufacturers Association and the National Metal Trades Association, was a formidable opponent. The counterpart of the Employers Association among the jobbing shops was the Automotive Tool and Die Manufacturing Association, formed under the auspices of the N.R.A. It was headed by C. C. Richard and his assistant N. A. Woodworth. Both of these associations became strike breaking agencies - applying money and influence toward defeating the strike.

The newspapers were also prejudiced against the strikers. They regularly published reports that the men were going back to work, and that the strike was breaking up. On October 7, the Detroit Times reported that a "careful canvas" showed that 1610 of the strikers (the total number of whom the Times put at 6300) had returned to work. The Detroit News on October 11 said: "Five hundred men have gone back to work in the last two days. When that many men return to work it means the strike is virtually over." The next day the same paper reported: "About 2,600 men have gone back to work since Friday as compared to 6,100 who walked out," but that same day, the M.E.S.A. held a parade down Woodward Avenue in which 10,000 striking tool and die makers participated. The Detroit Free Press openly attacked the strikers on its editorial page.

Even the American Federation of Labor actively opposed the strike. The Detroit Times reported that:

The American Federation of Labor joined hands with Flint automobile manufacturers today to halt a strike of tool and die makers affiliated with the M.E.S.A. The A.F. of L. acted suddenly this morning when officials of its local auto workers union addressed a mass meeting of five thousand men in the armory and urged the "use of persuasion, not force" against the strikers.²

Furthermore, the strikers were informed they could expect little sympathy from the federal government agencies concerned with the dispute. Abner E. Larned, head of the N.R.A. Compliance Board in Detroit expressed the attitude of that Board when he said, "The Board in Detroit is unsympathetic to industrial strikes except as a last resort in settling disputes. This is particularly true in regard to those preliminary processes that precede production and upon which the employment of thousands depends."³

Likewise, the National Labor Board through its Detroit representative, John M. Carmody, told the strikers in a mass meeting held at Arena Gardens on September 28: "It is unfortunate that the tremendous payroll represented in this hall has been stopped even a day.... Some of you do not realize, perhaps, what a long hard-fought strike would mean. Work certainly would be taken from your city and some of it would not come back."⁴ The N.L.B. was to confirm this unsympathetic attitude later.

On September 29, the strike committee presented to the Detroit and Pontiac employers their demands, which included:

1. A twenty-five per cent increase in all wages, with a minimum wage of one dollar an hour for bench men and ninety cents an hour for affiliated machinists.
2. Changes in the number of hours worked per week, so that the maximum number of men are employed.
3. No discrimination against strikers.
4. No Saturday, Sunday or holiday work.⁵

On October 5, the automobile manufacturers of Detroit replied with an ultimatum to the strikers which appeared in all three Detroit papers. Directed to the tool and die men, it said in part:

Those for whom there is work who do not return for work on or before Friday, October 6, 1933, will be deemed to have severed all relations with their respective companies and are directed to remove their tools forthwith.

It was signed by:

Cadillac Motor Car Company, Chevrolet Motor Company, Dodge Brothers Corporation, Fisher Body Corporation, Hudson Motor Car Company, Packard Motor Car Company, and Plymouth Motor Corporation.

The next day Culver, of the Employers Association, acknowledged, "The ultimatum admittedly had little effect. We didn't expect it to. ... But there are definite signs of weakening among the strikers."⁶

From the outset, the strike committee had sought blanket agreements with the automobile manufacturers and with the tool and die jobbers. The employers, however, insisted upon individual settlements and refused to arbitrate the dispute along with the independent tool and die shops.⁷ Negotiations were carried on for a time, though, in the headquarters of the Detroit Compliance Board of the N.R.A. The employers were represented by Culver, C. C. Richard and N.A. Woodworth; and the strikers by J. J. Griffin, chief of the joint strike committee, Matthew Smith, chairman of the Flint committee, and H. Spencer, chairman of the Pontiac committee. No progress was made, however, and the negotiations were described by Smith as "meaningless debates."⁸

From the outset, the tool and die makers' walkout proved a strong attraction to local Communists, who at first actively supported it. This caused Culver to express fear that the strike had "fallen into the hands of the Communists";⁹ but though this was far from the truth, there were a number of Communists actively participating. They were especially vocal in their demand that the strike committee hold out for simultaneous settlements with the automobile manufacturers and job shop employers and thereby maintain a "united front" among the workers.¹⁰ They soon began also insisting that the production workers in the auto plants be called out on strike. While the strike committee would have liked very much to have had the production workers join in the strike, they felt that such an objective was impracticable at that time.¹¹ Even if it could have been achieved, it would have been of doubtful value anyway, because it was the end of the year, and production was soon to be sharply curtailed on the 1933 models.

When the issue threatened a split in the union, the strike committee agreed to let the Communists try to organize the production workers. Under the leadership of John Anderson, leading Communist in the M.E.S.A., several mass meetings of production workers were scheduled. They were each conspicuous failures, however, with few workers attending. When further efforts were similarly unsuccessful, the attempt was abandoned.¹²

In about ten days, negotiations with the employers completely broke down, and an apparent stalemate had been reached. As the days wore on, it became increasingly difficult to maintain the morale of the strikers. Rumors that the strike was breaking up became increasingly widespread, and were reinforced by the newspaper reports previously mentioned.

At this juncture, the Detroit Free Press began a vigorous editorial attack on the strikers. In an editorial entitled "Strikes

Against America," it accused the strikers of being "guilty of a social offense" and contended that "the thing these men are doing is an affront and injury to all the people of America ... and is an evidence of gross ingratitude to the Government."¹³ Later, in an editorial headed "Take Them Off The List," the Free Press denounced the welfare commission for not refusing aid to the strikers and demanded, "The striker should be told to go back to work or starve."¹⁴

There were, however, encouraging elements. As previously mentioned, the parade conducted by the strike committee on October 12 did a great deal to neutralize the reports that the strike was breaking up.

The strikers also found a sympathetic and valuable friend in Recorder's Court Judge Edward J. Jeffries. He consistently gave encouragement and inspiration to the strikers, being a frequent speaker at their rallies and mass meetings. At one important mass meeting held at Arena Gardens on October 5, he advised the strikers: "If you don't get the right to organize now, you never will get it," and he urged them to hold out, saying:

"The government and the American people recognize the right of labor to organize. If the employers don't want you to organize, it is because they fear you will control your own destinies in their shops. If you are beaten now, you're absolutely sunk from now on. Have you got the guts to stand pat?"¹⁵

The meeting responded enthusiastically.

Aid also came from rather unexpected sources. Strikers found that with a little persuasion certain merchants would donate food and other necessities to their cause. Probably this was a mixture of good will and good business, since the strikers were potential future customers. In this connection, Sam's department store donated enough tobacco to keep a group of volunteer workers busy rolling cigarettes for more than a week; surplus milk was delivered in large quantities to Schiller Hall (the strikers' headquarters); fresh meat was donated; much of the gasoline used by the strikers was given to them; and the Indian Village Bakery Company gave free of charge to the strikers most of its day old bread and baked goods.¹⁶

But probably the most amazing of these fortunate developments was Matthew Smith's ability to raise cash. Goods and services were not difficult to obtain in Detroit in 1933, but real money was a different matter. Yet, in a week of intensive canvassing, Smith was able to raise, in the middle of the strike, a large sum of cash on his personal note. He borrowed most of the money from professional people - doctors, lawyers, etc. Most of his subscribers were quasi-socialists or liberals of one kind or another. Mr. Smith explained to each subscriber that he could not guarantee

repayment, but apparently they had faith in the movement or great sympathy with it, for in a week, Smith had raised \$10,000, and the union's cause was given a tremendous boost.¹⁷

The strikers were also further heartened when it was announced that the National Labor Board would hold a hearing on the strike, in Washington. The strike committee could not conceal its elation, Mr. Smith commenting, "It is just what we've been working for. . . . We hope this is the beginning of the end."¹⁸ But if the union representatives left for Washington optimistically, they returned bitterly disillusioned, for what happened in Washington was to become known in M.E.S.A. circles as the "Washington Run-around."

The hearing was scheduled for October 18. A committee of strikers was invited to represent the M.E.S.A., and William Knudsen, president of Chevrolet, C. C. Richard, head of the Automotive Tool and Die Association, and Alvin Macauley, president of Packard Motor, were invited to represent the employer group.

When first asked about his intentions regarding accepting the invitation to testify at the Washington hearing, Mr. Knudsen seemed to indicate that he would accept.¹⁹ But when the hearing began on October 18, neither Mr. Knudsen nor Mr. Macauley were present. Both had sent telegrams to Senator Wagner refusing to appear on the grounds that no violation of the Automotive Code of the N.R.A. was involved and that the Labor Board had no jurisdiction over labor disputes in which no violation of the code or the Recovery Act were involved.²⁰ The only employer spokesman present was C. C. Richard of the Automotive Tool and Die Association, and he declared that he was not there in an official capacity, but only as an "observer."²¹

The union representatives were dismayed. Mr. Smith argued that there was no point in holding the hearing as long as no one was present to represent the automobile manufacturers, but Senator Wagner stated that if the Board made a decision it would be binding on the automobile manufacturers even though they were not represented.²²

The union stated its side of the dispute, explaining to the Board how the exemption provisions of the automotive code made the regulations governing hours of labor virtually meaningless, how Section 7A of the N.R.A. was being subverted by employers forming company unions, and the importance to the M.E.S.A. of a joint settlement of the strike. The N.L.B. listened patiently, but soon the whole proceedings bogged down over the fact that the M.E.S.A. had not sent a list of demands to the employers in Detroit, before calling the walkout there. The impasse which developed is exemplified by the following excerpt from the Stenographic Report:

(Mr. Swope and Major Berry are N.L.B. members and Mr. Sugar and Mr. Smith are M.E.S.A. representatives.)

Mr. Smith: We sent a copy of our demands to all these employers individually, and we did not have one single reply.

Maj. Berry: You mean you did this before the strike?

Mr. Smith: Since the strike. Now, why should we go back to Detroit and do the same thing again?

Maj. Berry: Where is the record of that?

Mr. Smith: It will not be denied by the employers.

Maj. Berry: You certainly must have a record of having sent a notice to them.

Mr. Smith: Oh, yes: we have copies of that.

Mr. Swope: I think that ought to be done before a strike and not after.

Mr. Sugar: But it has been done since the strike. Do you want us to do it again?

Mr. Swope: Yes.

Mr. Sugar: Why not ask the employers who have received our request, now, at this belated period, to meet us.

Mr. Swope: We will ask the employers to act in accordance with 7a, which they have to do under the law, and any request from employees for a meeting to discuss collective bargaining, I am sure they will accede to.

Mr. Sugar: But they have it already.

Mr. Swope: You will have to do it again as far as this Board is concerned.²³

Thus it developed that nothing was accomplished in Washington and the strike committee was sent home, asked by the N.L.B. to again present demands to the management of each shop or factory that had been struck. The fact that these demands had already been made apparently had no bearing on the matter.

Disheartened, the committee returned to Detroit to report to the strikers. Convinced now that a blanket agreement with the employers was impossible, the men voted to negotiate contracts with each individual employer. The job shop owners were particularly anxious to settle the dispute. Mr. Joe Brown has, in his collection of documents, several letters from employers written to tool and die men who were on strike. These letters contain an assortment of attractive job offers, often with wage increases.²⁴ Before the strike was settled, however, the resentment which the strikers felt about the N.L.B. decision exploded in an outbreak of violence which left the employers even more receptive to negotiations.

On October 30, the headlines of all the Detroit newspapers were filled with stories about a mob of workers who visited the tool and die plants, traveling in automobiles and leaving a trail of

damage in their wake. The Detroit News estimated the number of men involved at 2,500. Describing the raids, the News said:

Blue prints were destroyed, cars wrecked and windows shattered in the first stop of the strikers at the Koestlin Tool and Die Corporation, 3601 Humboldt Ave.

Splitting into sections, the strikers then motored to the Lisk Machine and Tool Works at 4129 West Jefferson, where windows were broken.

Another segment was reported moving on the Frederick Colman and Son's tool factory at Central and West Warren Avenues.

Jay J. Griffin, chairman of the joint strike committee of the M.E.S.A., which has directed the tool and die walk-out, meanwhile rushed to the scene of the riots in an effort to stop the sabotage.

"We have nothing to do with the disturbance," Griffin said. "Our organization is against that sort of thing."

Forewarned of the approach of the mob, a number of tool and die factory officials were sending their men home and barricading their factories. Police armed with riot clubs and tear gas bombs were concentrated at the plants where it was believed the men would arrive.

The Koestlin riot started about 10 o'clock. Coming directly from a hall where a strike mass meeting was held, the crowd surged about the building, crashing bricks and stones through the windows.²⁵

The strikers, traveling with the precision and speed of a motorized military force, sped from one plant to another, aided by a series of misleading telephone calls to the police. In all, seven plants were visited. To stem the further spread of the riot, Police Superintendent James E. McCarthy ordered all policemen on duty, cancelled all leaves, and ordered all men from the reserve list held ready for duty.²⁶ The next day, however, the riot was completely under control. Peaceful picketing was resumed at the gates of all the struck plants. The reaction of the strikers to the results of the Washington hearing had burned itself out.

The day after the riot, the Detroit Regional Labor Board was set up under the impartial chairmanship of Abner E. Larned. Composed of eleven members, five of whom were members of labor organizations, the Board was established to help settle the tool and die strike and future labor disputes. There was, however, no representative of the M.E.S.A. on the Board.²⁷ As Jay J. Griffin protested:

The five labor members of the Detroit Board all represent the American Federation of Labor and its affiliates. The M.E.S.A. is not affiliated with the Federation. In fact,

no labor organization in the automobile industry is affiliated with the Federation, and so the entire industry is unrepresented on the Board.²⁸

The Regional Labor Board did, however, arrange parleys between the union and the employers, and on November 2, the M.E.S.A. announced with satisfaction that a settlement had been reached with the Ainsworth Manufacturing Company. This agreement, the first in the six weeks old strike, provided for a five-cent an hour wage increase, a minimum wage of eighty-five cents an hour, and recognition of the M.E.S.A. as the sole bargaining agent for employees in the plant.²⁹

The next day, the Midland Steel Products Company and the Hughes Metal Specialty Company settled with the union on essentially the same terms.³⁰ By November 5, twenty-nine of the tool and die jobbing plants had concluded agreements with their striking employees³¹ and on November 6, agreements were reached with the Fisher Body Corporation, Hudson Motor Car Company, and Packard Motor Car Company. These agreements did not provide for wage increases, but each of these companies agreed to recognize the M.E.S.A., and to rehire striking employees without discrimination.³² In the next few days, agreements on a variety of terms were reached with all employers in Flint, Detroit, and Pontiac, and the strike was terminated.

It is not a simple matter to evaluate the M.E.S.A.'s accomplishments in this first strike. One has constantly to bear in mind the circumstances under which the strike was conducted. For the union was in conflict with more than the specific groups of opposition previously mentioned; it was in conflict with the mores and philosophy of non-unionism, historically firmly established in Detroit's auto industry. One is also reminded that the M.E.S.A. at the beginning of the strike was loosely and apparently inefficiently organized as well as being almost entirely without funds. Yet, the union was able to gain the right to bargain for the majority of the tool and die workers in the auto industry and to get many of these workers wage increases. In addition, as a result of its efforts, the contract system was effectively abolished, and workers were henceforth provided with a medium for expressing grievances. Furthermore, the M.E.S.A. had been instrumental in getting adopted on November 11, the N.R.A. Code of the Tool and Die Industry.³³

This strike was, in a sense, the preface of what was to come in 1936 and 1937. It demonstrated that workers combined into a forceful, militant organization could become an effective bargaining agent. The success of the 1933 strike established the M.E.S.A. firmly in the field of labor organization.

1. Federated Press clippingsheet, October 1, 1933.
2. Detroit Times, September 24, 1933.
3. Detroit Times, September 25, 1933.
4. Detroit News, September 29, 1933.
5. Detroit Times, September 29, 1933.
6. Ibid., October 6, 1933.
7. According to Culver, "Detroit automobile manufacturers refuse to discuss arbitration with the Compliance Board along with owners of independent tool and die shops.... They also want the Detroit situation dealt with separately from the Pontiac and Flint problems."—Detroit Times, September 30, 1933.
8. Detroit Times, October 6, 1933.
9. Ibid., September 27, 1933.
10. Interview with Matthew Smith, May 7, 1949.
11. Ibid.
12. Interview with Joe Brown, May 22, 1949.
13. Detroit Free Press, October 3, 1933.
14. Ibid., October 26, 1933.
15. Detroit Times, October 6, 1933.
16. Interview with Matthew Smith, November 19, 1949.
17. Ibid.
18. Detroit News, October 14, 1933.
19. In replying to the question of whether he would appear, Mr. Knudsen said, "Well, when the government calls you, you usually go."—Detroit Times, October 14, 1933.
20. Detroit News, October 18, 1933.
21. Stenographic Report of the Hearing. Tool and Die Makers Strike in Detroit Area. October 18, 1933 (Washington: National Labor Board, 1933), p.3.
22. Ibid., p. 84.
23. Ibid., pp. 90-91.
24. For example, a letter from the Enterprise Tool and Gear Corporation to Oscar Hilborn, October, 1933 (MS in possession of Mr. Joe Brown) says in part: "We are advising several of our ex-employees, that we have employment for them at this time. While the volume of work is not as large as a month ago, we find that we can use you, should you desire to communicate with the writer on or before October 16th. The rate of wages in effect will be higher than when you quit, sometime ago."
25. Detroit News, October 30, 1933.
26. Detroit Times, October 30, 1933.
27. According to the Detroit Free Press, October 31, 1933, the new Detroit Regional Labor Board was composed as follows: Abner E. Larned, impartial chairman; Frederick J. Haynes, retired automobile manufacturer; Chester M. Culver, general manager of the Employers Association of Detroit; F. R. Ballback, Detroit Photo Engravers Union No. 12; I. M. Himelhoch, merchant; L. J. Coons, Electrical Workers Union No. 58; Joe Haksbacher, Metal Polishers Union No. 1; Frank X. Martel, Detroit Federation of Labor; William J. McAneeny, chairman of the Hudson Motor Car Company; P. J. O'Donnell, Allied Trade Printing Council; and A. R. Glancy, manufacturer.
28. Detroit News, November 1, 1933. After the strike, however, Matthew Smith was appointed to the Board but resigned early in 1934, charging the Board with a "do nothing policy."
29. Detroit News, November 2, 1933.
30. Ibid., November 3, 1933.
31. Detroit Times, November 5, 1933.
32. Detroit News, November 6, 1933.
33. The terms of this code were: Establishing of the forty hour week, time and one-half for work in excess of forty hours; and a maximum work week of forty-eight hours. The minimum wage was unchanged (forty cents an hour).—Detroit News, November 6, 1933.

CHAPTER III

CRYSTALLIZATION

As soon as practicable after the strike, the M.E.S.A.'s national officials were formally chosen. On January 21, 1934, the Detroit News carried a formal notice of the election, which was to be held in Schiller Hall. The advertisement emphasized the importance of each member casting his vote on one of the three days set aside for balloting, January 20-22. When the ballots were counted, Jesse Chapman had been chosen National President; James Murdoch, Vice President; Matthew Smith, General Secretary; and Walter E. Russell, Treasurer. In addition, J. J. Griffin, Harry Harrison, and Ralph Covert were elected as national organizers.

The next step was to arrange for an assembly of delegates from all the M.E.S.A. locals, at which the character and future policy of the union could be determined. February 26 was set as the date for the first convention, which was to be held in Schiller Hall. It was hoped that at this convention the various elements of the union would consolidate their gains, and thus make the organization capable of more effective concerted action thereafter. The convention turned out, however, to be merely a preliminary to this end. The delegates went on record in favor of a 25 per cent wage increase and a thirty hour work week and recommended that the M.E.S.A. establish and publish a newspaper. Then, after a tentative Constitution had been drawn up and a committee had been elected to work out the By-laws, the delegates voted to adjourn, with the announcement that another convention, to be held three months later, would finish the work begun.¹

The second convention, which lasted from May 24 through May 27, was held in Carpathia Hall, 3500 Elmwood Avenue. Delegates were present from Michigan locals in Detroit, Flint, and Pontiac and Ohio locals in Cleveland, Toledo, Elyria, and Salem.² This convention was a stormy one, and was marked by considerable confusion and delay, as delegate after delegate availed himself of his virtually unrestricted freedom to speak.³ This was a novel and exciting experience for men who had spent most of their lives in the routine of factory work. There was little in the way of experience or precedent to temper what was said. It is not surprising that many curious and conflicting proposals were presented to the assembly.

After representatives had reported on the activities and condition of their respective locals, the Revision Committee submitted its report regarding changes in the tentative Constitution and By-Laws. The changes dealt chiefly with the duties of the national officials and the procedures for recalling them. The general principle that accused officials be tried before the bodies which elected them was suggested and accepted.

Much of the time of the second convention was devoted to discussing the establishing of a newspaper. Apparently all the delegates were agreed as to the need for an official organ. There was, however, some difference of opinion regarding the policy which the Editorial Board should adopt. Another, and more formidable obstacle, was the method of financing the paper. Some of the delegates argued that after the publication of the first issue, the paper should be allowed to live or die on its own merits. But it was generally agreed that it would take compulsory subscription, or some other form of subsidy, to keep the paper solvent for the first few months of its existence. After hours of debate, a committee appointed to settle the issue recommended a compromise whereby all the locals would subsidize the first three months deficit on a pro-rata basis.⁴

The Constitution and By-Laws as finally approved at the convention was a flexible document and provided for democratic rank and file control of union affairs.⁵ It also formally made the M.E.S.A. an industrial, rather than a craft, union. Under Article II, two classes of membership were established. The first was open to skilled workers only, i.e., such as tool, die, jig, and fixture makers. A separate section was established to provide for the membership of production workers. The initiation fee was fixed at one dollar, and monthly dues were set at one dollar per month for skilled workers, and fifty cents per month for members in the production section.

Another important feature of the Constitution was the establishment, under Article VIII, of a shop steward system. This article provides that the men of each shift at a given shop select, as their spokesman, a shop steward whose principal function was to be that of organizer. The steward soon came to serve another immensely important function, however. He came increasingly to be the man to whom workers with grievances, against either the employer or the union, came. Thus he served an important liaison function, providing the connecting link between the individual worker and union officialdom. Since he was chosen by the men on his own shift, who worked alongside him, he was extremely conscious of, and responsive to, their needs. For this reason, the steward became aggressive in keeping both employer and union official aware of his fellow workers' desires.

The Constitution and By-Laws provided further that the question of striking, and all other important issues, could be settled only by a meeting of all the workers involved. No local or national official had the power to call or end a strike. Nor could an M.E.S.A. official sit in a bargaining session with an employer and claim that he had been empowered to call a strike unless certain demands were met. Strike votes were taken under the system established by the M.E.S.A. charter after bargaining sessions - not before.⁶

As a result of the achievements of the second convention, the M.E.S.A. became formalized under a charter which left complete ultimate control in the hands of the workers, when they met in joint assembly. With but minor alterations, the M.E.S.A. has retained this essential democratic character to the present day.

NOTES

1. Federated Press clippingsheet, February 28, 1934.

2. "Minutes of the Second M.E.S.A. National Convention." Detroit, 1934. (MS in possession of Mr. Joe Brown.) The first issue of the M.E.S.A. Voice, however, which was published in June, 1934, revealed that, in addition to these, locals had been established in Alliance and Defiance, O.; Brooklyn, N.Y.; Bridgeport, Rockford, and New Haven, Conn.; Chicago and Rockford, Ill.

3. Ibid.

4. The M.E.S.A. Voice appeared sporadically, but was discontinued in 1935, after eight issues, because of a lack of funds. It was, moreover, superseded by the M.E.S.A. Educator, about a year later.

5. See Appendix B for a complete transcript of the original Constitution and By-Laws.

6. The only exception to this procedure today is found in areas in which the law requires a period of advance notice before a strike may be called. And even there, after such advance notice has been given, and has expired, a strike can only be begun after another confirmatory vote of the workers actually involved has been taken.

CHAPTER IV

RETARDATION

Early in 1934, labor unrest seemed to be threatening an explosion in the automobile industry. Under Clause 7A of the N.I.R. A., a number of A.F. of L. federal locals had been established in auto plants. In March, a crisis was reached when the A.F. of L. submitted to the auto manufacturers demands (1) that a referendum be held in the auto industry to authorize employee representatives in all plants, (2) that the employers cease forming company unions, and (3) that all employees who had been discharged because of union activities, be reinstated.¹

When the auto manufacturers declined to agree to these demands, the A.F. of L. workers prepared to walkout. William Green, president of the A.F. of L., announced that the auto industry "is on the verge of one of the greatest strikes in the history of the nation."² The Literary Digest noted that "paralysis of the industry" had been threatened.³ Business Week expressed concern "for the threat which hung over the country" and suggested as an explanation of the A.F. of L.'s sudden militancy that "the Mechanics Educational Society of America, originally made up of skilled tool and die workers, has recently been broadening its membership among the production workers...."⁴

With the prospect of a general strike in the auto industry, the M.E.S.A. was left in a discomfiting position. If the federal unions of the A.F. of L. went out on strike, and the auto industry was closed down, M.E.S.A. members might well find themselves out on the street with no demands.

Largely because of this fact, the M.E.S.A. early in April demanded of all its tool and die shops a 20 per cent raise in hourly wage rates, and the establishment of a thirty-five hour, five day week.⁵ Now, if the auto industry became tied up in a general strike, the M.E.S.A. would have a basis for bargaining too.

The A. F. of L. strike, however, never materialized. The National Labor Board, under the chairmanship of Senator Robert F. Wagner, met with A.F. of L. leaders and spokesmen for the auto industry and effected a settlement. The Christian Century commented that the settlement had been reached "at the last possible moment, when a strike involving a quarter of a million men in the automobile industry was reported as inevitable...."⁶

In essence, the settlement provided for the establishment of the Automobile Labor Board, an agency which would mediate employer-employee problems in the auto industry.⁷ This Board was to have authority in questions of employee representation, discrimination, and discharge. Despite the A.F. of L.'s demands, company unions were declared legitimate and were given equal status with other unions. The settlement was, however, preceded by a voluntary strategic general wage increase of 10 per cent by the auto manufacturers. When the settlement was announced, the A. F. of L. strike was, for the time being at least, called off.

The M.E.S.A. had now to decide whether to abandon the demands they had submitted or to follow through on them. After several heated meetings, it was decided not to withdraw the demands. For one thing, the auto workers had gained a 10 per cent raise. In addition, some of the job shop employers had indicated willingness to negotiate the demands. Furthermore, the withdrawal of demands, once submitted carried with it an embarrassing aspect of docility.⁸ For these reasons, the tool and die men decided to press their demands on the jobbers, and on April 5, the Detroit News reported that "a strike threat hangs over the tool and die industry."

On April 12, the Automotive Tool and Die Manufacturing Association, speaking on behalf of its sixty-two member shops, rejected the union's demands and charged the M.E.S.A. with "hindering the return of prosperity, and adopting an extremely arbitrary position."⁹ At a union meeting, which the Detroit Times characterized as "uproarious," it was decided to strike to enforce the union's demands.¹⁰ At first, it was believed the strike would be a general one - involving all the tool and die shops in Detroit. But since a few of the shops had already agreed to the union's demands and several others seemed willing to accede, it was decided that any shop which met the M.E.S.A. demands would be exempt from the strike.¹¹

It was further agreed that each striker would remove his tools from the shop where he was employed and have them stored at a bonded warehouse for the duration of the strike. The strike was to be partly financed through assessments against the men who remained at work. M.E.S.A. men who worked in job shops which did not join the strike were to contribute whatever wage increase they had gained, and those members employed in the auto plants were to contribute one dollar per week to the support of the men on strike.¹²

From the outset, it was evident that there was not the degree of unanimity in this strike that there had been in the 1933 strike. For one thing, the workers were not as dissatisfied. The union had won recognition, and contract work had been abolished. Some of the men felt that it would be disastrous to strike for further concessions so soon. Besides, this was the beginning of the slack

season in the tool and die trade. Furthermore, the men were by no means universally in support of the thirty-five hour week. This plan to spread the work was in conflict with a firmly established habit of many of the tool and die men, who were accustomed to working long hours in order to make as much money as possible in rush seasons. Unfortunately, since 1930, the indulgence of this habit had tended to result in a situation where a portion of the skilled labor force was working seventy or eighty hours a week, and the remainder was chronically unemployed.¹³ The M.E.S.A. leadership took the altruistic position that the lot of all the tool and die men would be improved by dividing the available work among all of them. Obviously, this proposal did not arouse great enthusiasm among those who were regularly employed.

The jobbing shops, most of which were members of the Automotive Tool and Die Manufacturing Association, were well organized in their resistance. Matthew Smith accused the Association and its manager, Frederick J. Haynes, of bringing pressure to bear to prevent individual employers from yielding to the union's demands, even if they were personally willing. He said:

Saturday we found two jobbers who were willing to sign an agreement with us prior to the "pep" meeting of the Association in the Hotel Statler. After that meeting, however, they said they had been forced to refuse.¹⁴

The Detroit newspapers were again opposed to the work stoppage. The day before the strike began, the Detroit Free Press bitterly denounced Smith's leadership in an editorial entitled "Keep Your Job." Written for the tool and die men, the editorial advised:

Keep your job for the sake of your wives and children and yourselves; keep your jobs for the sake of your fellow workers. Keep your jobs to make recovery certain. Keep your jobs for your President who has led you on your way out of hunger and darkness into the path of food and happiness....

and added:

Matthew J. Smith is the organizer and guiding brain of the Mechanics Educational Society of America. He is an Englishman who came over to America in 1928. His business, his profession, is organizing labor unions. Mr. Smith is, no doubt, a sincere and estimable gentleman. But we must not lose sight of the fact that his job is to get signatures of membership in his organization. His salary and his success depend on how many he can induce to sign on the dotted line. He has no more interest in the welfare of Detroit than he had when he was leading labor organizations in England....¹⁵

While trying to carry on a strike, which was by no means being unanimously or enthusiastically supported, in the face of the organized and determined resistance of the Tool and Die Association, the M.E.S.A. became involved in what turned out to be a disastrous dispute at the Detroit-Michigan Stove Works. On April 9, the production workers of this plant went out on strike for a 20 per cent wage increase, under the auspices of the M.E.S.A. After several riots and violent encounters between strikers and the strike breakers who were hired by the company, the strike was completely and effectively smashed. The union accused the company of employing gangsters and thugs as strikebreakers. The first riot was a terrific struggle, resembling a pitched battle:

The disorders at the stove company factory took place at noon. The eight hundred who walked out Monday were replaced this morning by new workers. At noon, when the new workers left the factory for their lunch hour, they carried hammers, clubs, and pieces of boards. They were met in the middle of Jefferson Avenue by strikers, who had been lounging on the north side of that thoroughfare. Fists flew, clubs descended and were uplifted again, and stones hurtled through the air. Fifty-five policemen joined in the battle, swinging night sticks....

The police estimated that, at the height of the battle, five hundred were engaged....¹⁶

The defeat of the Stove Works strike further drained the M.E.S.A.'s resources and weakened its position.

The tool and die makers' strike was comparatively quiet and orderly. On April 21, swiftly moving motorcades of "brick bat troops" stoned the Enterprise Tool and Gear Corporation, 1590 E. Philadelphia, and the Superior Tool Works, 6633 Rohns Avenue, but except for these incidents, and one or two other minor outbursts, this strike was remarkably free from violence.¹⁷

As the strike dragged on, the unity and determination of the employers became increasingly obvious. At the same time, dissension was splitting the ranks of the tool and die men. The mass meeting in Schiller Hall on May 18 was an uproarious one. One of the members of the M.E.S.A. district board was suspended and thrown out of the meeting bodily for allegedly telling the press that members were not united in the strike. In a speech frequently interrupted by shouts from the audience, Harry Harrison, national organizer, declared:

This isn't a strike. You are just sitting around waiting for things to come to you. Only a few have actually walked out of the shops where a strike has been declared. Out at Lamb's [F. Joseph Lamb Tool and Die Co.] where they have sixty-two M.E.S.A. members, fifty are working everyday.

This is happening everywhere. They walk right through the picket lines to go to work.

Joe Lamb has openly laughed at us and said: "Oh, the men will work all right." We've got to turn out, every one of us...¹⁸

When negotiations completely broke down, early in May, sentiment grew among the workers to end the walkout. A few days later, the men gradually began returning to work. In a number of cases, wage increases had been obtained. There was, however, no general increase, and the thirty-five hour week was not established.

A return to work under such circumstances could scarcely be interpreted as evidence of a successful strike. The reserves of the union had been severely drained. Yet, to this day, Matthew Smith insists that the strike very definitely had its compensations. On the basis of this demonstration that the M.E.S.A. could effectively call out tool and die men if it were necessary, he claims that many future concessions were won without having to resort to work stoppages.¹⁹

There may be considerable merit in this contention. The magazine Steel, taking stock of the effectiveness of the strike, made the extraordinary proposal that the auto industry abandon its practice of changing models each year in order to thwart "the one way antagonism that the M.E.S.A. has persisted in continuing."²⁰

Thus, it is difficult to conclude, in the long run, whether or not the job shop strike should be considered a success. It is impossible, however, to consider the strike at the Burroughs Adding Machine Company, which began the next month, as anything but a complete and utter failure.

This strike began on May 22, following the firing of a tool and die maker, John Koettters. According to company officials, Koettters was fired because he damaged a tool, and tried to repair it himself, instead of reporting it to his foreman.²¹ Koettters, however, was chairman of the Burroughs shop committee, and the union charged that this was the real cause of his dismissal.²² As soon as news of his discharge was received, the rest of the tool and die makers walked out, declaring they would stay out until Koettters was reinstated. The Detroit News put the number of men involved at 237; the M.E.S.A. Voice put the figure at 400.²³

The strike began in earnest the next day when a picket line was established outside the plant. Strike meetings were called regularly. At one of these meetings, Norman Thomas spoke to the strikers and urged them to "keep up the fight and win this strike."²⁴ The workers "kept up the fight" for seven weeks, displaying unusual stamina, but lost the strike anyway.

For one thing, the union was never able to seriously reduce production at Burroughs. Most of the rest of the plant's three thousand workers walked unconcernedly through the picket lines, amply protected by the police.²⁵ There were a few instances of violence, but violence was effectively eliminated by a substantial increase in the police guard. An effort to bring the production workers out on strike, too, was conspicuously unsuccessful.

From the outset, the Company had declined to arbitrate the dispute. Hence the strike committee, headed by Al Bechtel, secretary of M.E.S.A. Local 8, depended heavily on its appeal to the Regional Labor Board, in which it charged the Burroughs Company with anti-union discrimination.²⁶ As the strike dragged into its seventh week, the Board announced its decision.²⁷ It declared that the disciplining of Koettters did not constitute anti-union discrimination. Bechtel declared that the Board had promised to withhold its decision until the Company and union could get together in pending mediation conferences, and charged that the premature announcement of its decision constituted "a plain double cross of the workers."²⁸ The decision was violently attacked in the M.E.S.A. Voice. A long editorial which presumed to analyze the prejudices of each of the Board members concluded that:

An "impartial" chairman, dependent upon employers for subsidies, an "impartial" secretary who is the son-in-law of one of Detroit's biggest employer-politicians, six representatives of the bosses, and six representatives of an opposition union - these men to mediate and conciliate the Burroughs strike!

Is it any wonder that their decision and actions in a clear case of anti-union discrimination were anti-labor?²⁹

When the decision of the Board was announced, the strikers were dismayed. It now seemed futile to continue the strike, and at a meeting a few days later, the strikers voted to end the walkout. Since the strike was called off without gaining the reinstatement of Koettters, the dispute ended as a signal victory for the Burroughs Company.

NOTES

1. "Auto Workers in Revolt," Nation, CXXXVIII (March 28, 1934), 347.
2. "Automobile Industry and A.F. of L. Throw Down Gage of Battle," Newsweek, III (March 24, 1934), 8.

3. "The Clash in the Motor Industry," The Literary Digest, CXVII (March 31, 1934), 7.
4. "Motor Truce," Business Week, March 10, 1934, p. 10.
5. This is the reason given by Smith in the M.E.S.A. Voice, September, 1934, for submitting new demands at this time.
6. The Christian Century, LI (April 4, 1934), 443.
7. The Board was composed of Dr. Leo Wolman, government appointee, Richard L. Byrd, labor representative, and Nicholas Kelley, employer representative. - "New Course Set by Auto Pact," Newsweek, III (April 7, 1934), 8.
8. Matthew Smith, "Militant Labor in Detroit," Nation, CXXXVIII (May 16, 1934), 560.
9. Detroit News, April 12, 1934.
10. Detroit Times, April 13, 1934.
11. Detroit News, April 12, 1934.
12. Detroit Times, April 13, 1934.
13. Interview with Joe Brown, November, 1949.
14. Detroit News, April 16, 1934.
15. Detroit Free Press, April 12, 1934.
16. Detroit News, April 10, 1934.
17. Detroit Free Press, April 21, 1934.
18. Detroit News, April 19, 1934.
19. Interview with Matthew Smith, May 7, 1949.
20. "Mirrors of Motordom," Steel, April 30, 1934, p. 18.
21. Detroit News, May 23, 1934.
22. Ibid.
23. Detroit News, May 23, 1934; M.E.S.A. Voice, June, 1934.
24. M.E.S.A. Voice, June, 1934.
25. Interview with Joe Brown, November 5, 1949.
26. M.E.S.A. Voice, July 23, 1934.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid. Matthew Smith himself was a member of the Board for a brief period early in 1934; his resignation left the M.E.S.A. without representation on it.
29. Ibid.

CHAPTER V

FACTIONALISM

From its inception, the M.E.S.A. had attracted Communists - both regular party members and fellow-travelers. They had been active in the 1933 strike, being the primary force behind the demand for a joint settlement of the strike and the maintenance of a "united front." This had led to the Communists' unsuccessful attempt to induce the production workers to join in the strike. Differences of opinion in these matters had begun a split between the Communists or Progressives in the union and the M.E.S.A. leadership, especially as represented by Matthew Smith and Harry Harrison. In the ensuing months, the rift was widened and brought into the open.

With the publicity and prestige which the union received as a result of its success in 1933, the M.E.S.A.'s membership rolls grew rapidly. Prominent among the new recruits were Communists and Communist sympathizers. The strength of this faction grew, and with the setbacks which the M.E.S.A. received in 1934, it became increasingly vocal. Some of the locals came to be dominated by the Progressive faction. The Communists were not able to secure any of the key administrative positions, however, and in the December 1934 elections were defeated in their efforts to extend their influence to the district and national levels.

Frustrated in this attempt to expand its influence in the union, the Communist faction, on occasion, used its strength to embarrass the M.E.S.A. leadership. Consequently, the rift between the opposing factions grew wider and culminated on April 25, 1934, in the District Committee (headed by Smith) ordering the expulsion of John Anderson and John Mack, the leading Communists in the M.E.S.A., and announcing its intention to expel all known Communists from the union.¹

The leaders of the M.E.S.A. had been intermittently criticized in such Communist organs as the Daily Worker and the Auto Workers News. In time, this criticism became stronger, and the Daily Worker urged:

Militants of the Mechanics Educational Society of America must begin the movement to oust Matthew Smith without delay.... His is a sham radicalism that leads men

to a strike or to the verge of a strike and then betrays that strike movement...the M.E.S.A. must first of all, ditch Matthew Smith....²

After the expulsion of Anderson and Mack, the Daily Worker charged that

The Smith leadership of the M.E.S.A. launched a campaign to expel all Communists and other militant workers from the organization about three weeks ago to cover up the loss of the strikes of tool and diemakers, and of the Michigan Stove Company workers, and to smash all opposition to the disastrous policies of the Smith machine.³

Anderson and Mack were themselves conducting a vigorous propaganda campaign. A thirteen page pamphlet entitled The Case of the Progressives Against Smith's Expulsion and Splitting Drive in the M.E.S.A., set forth their case at length and was freely circulated. These efforts were met with a measure of success when, at a meeting on May 16, Local 7 (Anderson's local) repudiated the action of the District Committee in suspending Anderson and reinstated him.⁴

The District Committee's offensive against the Communists was partly successful, however. The Progressives,⁵ put on the defensive, were forced to relax their overt opposition and work less openly. Their activities hereafter centered primarily around efforts to depose Smith as National Secretary of the union. In the December elections, Anderson opposed Smith for the post of National Secretary but was beaten by a large majority.⁶

The Communists made a strong effort to dislodge Smith at the third national convention. At this convention, held in Cleveland from January 2 through January 6, 1935, the big issue was that of union finance. The year 1934 was, from a financial standpoint at any rate, not a prosperous one for the M.E.S.A. The National Office was singularly hard hit. Its income was derived from a portion of the dues collected by each local, and paid as a per capita tax by each local on the basis of its membership. However, when members of a local were on strike, or otherwise unemployed, the local was not required to pay the tax for them. This made the actual monthly income of the National Office highly unpredictable. Furthermore, this arrangement made it very difficult to check the accuracy of a local's report of dues collections. Not infrequently, a local which had paid little in the way of per capita taxes could itself boast a prosperous treasury.⁷

On the first day of the convention, Smith, as National Secretary, submitted to the delegates a report which revealed there were balances due not only on the expenses of the national officers but also on their salaries for the preceding year. The report was followed by the first of a number of proposals by Smith, and

other M.E.S.A. officials, for bolstering the National Office's financial structure.⁸

Most of these proposals provided in one way or another for assuring the national level of the union an adequate regular income, by obliging the locals to a fixed monthly or yearly commitment. Smith and his supporters were willing to allow a substantial reduction in the per capita tax, with the provision that the local pay it regularly as a permanent obligation for each member of the local, even when he was not working. It was argued that this would not be too great a hardship on the locals, since each local was composed of several different shops, and it was not likely that the entire membership of a local would be on strike or unemployed at one time.⁹

These proposals met with considerable opposition. Many local officers felt that their locals should not be saddled with a fixed obligation when their own income was by no means certain. The effect might be simply to shift the union's financial uncertainty from the national level to the local level. However, this contention was difficult to support in light of the general solvency of the treasuries of most of the locals.

The Communist faction at once seized upon this issue and joined the opposition to Smith. The Progressives were not slow to recognize that if they would keep the National Office short of funds, they could greatly restrict Smith's influence in the union. Holding private caucuses of their own in a hotel near the convention hall, the Progressives organized their strategy carefully. Whenever the per capita tax question was brought up, they made full use of parliamentary dilatory tactics to postpone or help defeat the proposal. The issue became a leading subject of debate at each session of the convention, and several times Smith threatened to resign over it.¹⁰

The last session of the convention began Saturday morning, January 6. Before long, the question of the financial plight of the National Office was again before the delegates. A protracted and heated debate began, which, except for several short recesses, was to last far into the night. At midnight, the issue was still far from resolved, and it was agreed to adjourn briefly. During the adjournment, the opposing forces hastily met in caucus to re-establish their positions. Around one o'clock, the convention reconvened. Shortly after debate had been resumed, a delegate from Elyria, Ohio took the floor. He had been an outspoken opponent of the fixed per capita tax proposal. He reported, however, that in the caucus he had just attended, he had inadvertently learned that much of the opposition to this proposal was organized around a plot to keep the National Office without funds, and in this way force Smith to resign. Denouncing these tactics, he stated

that he wished now to go on record in favor of the proposal. Apparently as a result of this revelation, several other delegates enthusiastically joined him. At two A.M. Sunday morning a final vote was taken and the measure was passed.¹¹ It provided that henceforth each local would pay a fixed per capita tax on the basis of its total membership, including those temporarily unemployed. In addition, a system of dues collection was established whereby each local issued receipts for dues paid in the form of stamps which were pasted in the members' dues books. These stamps the local purchased from the National Office at full price, getting the money back from its members when they paid their dues. This arrangement greatly simplified the matter of checking a local's dues collections.

While union finance was the most time consuming item on the agenda, other important business was transacted too. The delegates formally extended unqualified eligibility for membership to all persons working in "the automobile or allied metal trades industries." Sections one and two, which had been separately established for skilled and unskilled workers, were eliminated. Members were now to be assigned to locals according to their place of employment rather than as skilled or unskilled workers.¹²

The Interstate Committee was changed to the National Administrative Committee, which was to be composed entirely of men who actually earned their living working in the shops. Salaried officers in the union could attend N.A.C. meetings, and make recommendations, but they had no vote in the proceedings. The N.A.C., which constitutes the highest authority in the M.E.S.A., was accorded plenary power in the conduct of the union's affairs. Subject to confirmation by a referendum vote, the N.A.C. could make changes in the by-laws or depose national officers. In addition, the Committee was given the power to pass on all applications for charters.¹³

All in all, the convention had been a hectic one. It had been characterized, to an even greater degree than the first two had been, by excessive and unwieldy democracy, confusion, and delay. The eleventh hour settlement of the convention's most important piece of business demonstrated rather clearly the risk involved in leaving issues vital to the union to an annual convention for settlement. It is significant that the M.E.S.A.'s third national convention was its last. Hereafter, regularly scheduled meetings of the National Administrative Committee took the place of national conventions.

NOTES

1. This policy was announced in the Detroit News, April 26, 1934.
2. Daily Worker, April 11, 1934.
3. Ibid., May 17, 1934.
4. Ibid.
5. The terms Communist and Progressive are often interchangeable, but usually the Progressives included Communist Party members and individual opponents of Smith.
6. M.E.S.A. Voice, January, 1935.
7. Interview with Joe Brown, February 5, 1950.
8. "Minutes of the Third National Convention." Cleveland, 1935. (MS in possession of Mr. Joe Brown.)
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. This story of the Saturday night session was secured in an interview with Joe Brown, February 21, 1950, who reported the convention for the Federated Press.
12. "Minutes of the Third National Convention."
13. Ibid.

LOCAL #72
MECHANICS EDUCATIONAL
SOCIETY OF AMERICA (MESA)

CHAPTER VI

THE MOTOR PRODUCTS DEBACLE

In November of 1935, the M.E.S.A. became involved in a conflict, the ultimate consequences of which were so serious that for a time the union's continued existence in Detroit seemed threatened. This conflict was the Motor Products strike - a strike which became the background for a bitter and disastrous jurisdictional quarrel. Again this was a strike not initiated by the M.E.S.A.

Early in 1935, the M.E.S.A. had organized the 153 tool and die makers at the Motor Products Corporation, 11801 Mack Avenue. There were, however, members of two other unions employed at the plant - the United Auto Workers-A.F. of L. and Richard Frankenstein's newly formed Automotive Industrial Workers Association. Nominally at least, the majority of the plant's 3800 production workers belonged to the A.I.W.A., although the A.F. of L. also claimed a substantial membership.

Frankenstein, who wanted to begin negotiations with the Motor Products Corporation for his A.I.W.A., extended an invitation to the M.E.S.A. to participate jointly in the bargaining sessions. If the A.I.W.A. decided to go out on strike, the M.E.S.A., whose established policy would not countenance crossing another union's picket line, would find its men out on the street too. For this reason, Frankenstein's invitation was accepted.¹

Negotiations did not progress satisfactorily, and on November 15, an A.I.W.A. mass meeting was held to take a strike vote, and bring pressure to bear on the management. Once begun, however, the mass meeting got out of hand, and cajoled by radical, impetuous, self-appointed orators, the workers voted to walk out at once. The M.E.S.A. members voted to go out in sympathy, albeit with misgivings.²

The strike started out well enough when, the next day, W. V. Heimeel, vice president of the Motor Products Corporation, announced the entire plant was closed.³ The course that the strike was to take, however, was foreshadowed when Smith proposed to Francis J. Dillon, head of the U.A.W.-A.F. of L., that joint action be taken in the conduct of the strike. In a telegram Dillon replied, "A.F. of L. auto unions cannot assume responsibility for the conduct of any strike in the absence of the common courtesy of being previously consulted."⁴

A few days later, in addressing a mass meeting sponsored by the A.F. of L. local in the Motor Products plant, Dillon denounced "dual unionism" and declared that he would "take the Motor Products workers back to their jobs at once." He also accused Smith of "sticking a dagger in the back of organized labor" and declared, "I'm calling his bluff. One of us is leaving - and I'm staying."⁵ The declaration by Dillon that he would use the U.A.W. members in the plant as strike breakers, was a severe blow to the hopes of the strikers, and was bitterly assailed by them. Next, the U.A.W.-A.F. of L. arranged a conference with the Motor Products management to discuss the dispute, and following the conference, five hundred men returned to work.⁶

Events were further complicated when on November 25, at 2:20 A.M., an A.F. of L. meeting place at 3811 Gladwin Avenue was bombed. The jurisdictional quarrel was at once looked upon as an explanation of the bombing. That day, Dillon declared:

We will hold Smith personally responsible if any of our people are intimidated, injured, or coerced, and we don't need the help of the police.... I can say this much. William Green will have nothing to do with a rump, impossible outfit like Matt Smith's. We invited them to join our international but they declined and failed to notify us about their strike. We won't confer with them or cooperate with them, and we will be here for some time after they have gone....⁷

Smith denied knowing anything about the bomb.⁸

Later that day, a group of Motor Products U.A.W. members met in front of their local headquarters and marched behind their shop committee to the plant, escorted by a cordon of police. Nearby, a mob rushed A.F. of L. officials as they entered an automobile, after surveying the damage done by the bombing. Three of the A.F. of L. men were injured.⁹

A Federal Labor Department conciliation commissioner, Robert Mythen, had been sent to mediate the dispute. On December 3, after six days of fruitless negotiations, he announced his intention to return to Washington, saying, "I have done all I can do here."¹⁰ The company stated that it would continue operating the plant, and that workers would be protected if they wished to work.¹¹

The failure of negotiations and the reluctance of the company to mediate the dispute were reported to the strikers at a mass meeting in Germania Hall, Mack and Elmwood Avenues. Smith, Frankenstein, and Judge Edward J. Jeffries addressed the workers. Following the meeting, the strikers, angry and resentful at these developments, marched to the Motor Products plant. Before long, a full scale riot was under way. When the tumult ended, twenty-two persons had been injured, and fifty more were suf-

fering ill effects from tear gas. Nine carloads of police had been rushed from McClellan Station and nearby precincts when Lieutenant Anton Sorenson, in charge of the sixty police already on duty, had reported the situation was getting out of hand. A woman who operated a nearby grocery store on Mack Avenue complained that a pile of bricks with which she had planned to build an addition to her store had been almost entirely depleted by the rioters. Eleven of the strikers were arrested.¹²

Two different versions of the origin of the riot were reported. Joseph Daylor, president of the A.I.W.A. local in the plant, said:

The failure of the company to negotiate this strike made the boys angry, and they decided to put on a demonstration to show the company there was a strike.

We were marching up and down in the picket line peacefully when the officers clubbed a couple of our men, dragging them out of the picket line. Then they closed the gate and clubbed them through the bars.¹³

But according to Lieutenant Sorenson:

The trouble began when the strikers started to mob the gate and showered bricks and bottles on the police. We sent the men out to club them when they attempted to break into the plant.¹⁴

The next day, Police Commissioner Heinrich Pickert announced that picketing at the plant would be stopped, because "strikers had broken two promises to refrain from violence."¹⁵ However, after a delegation of strikers called on Mayor James Couzens and pledged there would be no more violence, the Mayor allowed picketing to resume.¹⁶

It had become increasingly obvious to the independent unions in Detroit that if they could in some way combine their strength, they would be in a much better position to meet the A.F. of L.'s attack on "dual unionism." Early in December, John L. Lewis began "dickering with the independents," following his resignation as a vice-president of the A.F. of L.¹⁷ The independents in this case were the M.E.S.A., Frankenstein's A.I.W.A., and Arthur Greer's Associated Auto Workers of America, whose principal strength in Detroit was in the plants of the Hudson Motor Car Company. The leaders of these independent unions, however, wanted complete autonomy for their separate organizations, and chiefly for this reason, negotiations with Lewis never got much beyond the "dickering" stage.

For some time, however, the leaders of the M.E.S.A., the A.I.W.A., and the A.A.W.A., on their own initiative, had been considering a merger of their respective organizations. Finally, tentative agreement was reached, and a convention was arranged

for December 21, to adopt a constitution for an amalgamation of the three unions, providing that, in the meantime, a poll of their members approved the merger. Tice W. Woody, of Pontiac, representing the A.A.W.A., was selected to act as temporary president of the proposed new union, called the Industrial, Automobile, and Metal Workers Union. Smith was chosen as temporary secretary, and Frankenstein as temporary treasurer. These men announced that pending the convention, the three organizations stood affiliated for mutual organization and protection.¹⁸

With the prospect of a consolidation of the opposition to his U.A.W., and under heavy attack from a variety of critics for his strike breaking activities, Dillon began to yield his position. Before a meeting of strikers on December 5, Dillon and Smith shook hands, although they were shaking fists under each other's noses a short time later. In his speech Dillon pledged his cooperation in the strike, and agreed to have his U.A.W. local at the plant vote on joining the walkout.¹⁹ A few days later, he announced that the local had voted in favor of joining the strike, and added:

This is a fight against the entire association of automobile manufacturers, who are out to drive unions from their plants. In the not far distant future, however, there will be a united organization of workers in this industry.

American Federation of Labor members will join the independents in the strike.²⁰

According to Dillon's announced plan, the U.A.W. men in the Motor Products plant were to sit down at their machines and stop work at 2 P.M. on December 17.²¹ There is no agreement as to what actually happened in the plant that day. W. V. Heimeel, vice president of the company, and several of the Motor Products employees said there had been no sitdown.²² Dillon claimed, however, that members of his U.A.W. local sat down at their machines for a half hour and that:

The management agreed to meet a committee from the union, but only on condition that the men return to work before the conference began. When the committee of employees met A. R. Kelso, the production manager, Kelso refused each of their demands. He refused to take the City police away from the plant and said the company would do as it pleased about rehiring its employees who were out on strike or who had not been allowed to return to work after the plant was closed on the outbreak of the independents' strike.²³

Dillon concluded with the extraordinary announcement that the U. A.W. now planned to withdraw from the strike, stating, "I won't advise men to strike when there is no possible chance for success."²⁴

For this withdrawal, Dillon was again savagely denounced

by the strike leaders. In the Daily Worker, he was accused of calling the sitdown "only to save face and redeem himself with his own union members." The article added that

After the failure through lack of any intention to enforce it of the so-called "sitdown" attempt, by which the A.F. of L. members in the shop were to stay in but stop work and force the company to terms, the company told the A.F. of L. union that all its demands were rejected.

This left no reasonable alternative except an actual strike, along with the strikers belonging to the independent union.

But Dillon announced instead, that "under existing conditions we will withdraw completely from any further participation whatever in this controversy."²⁵

Regardless of how Dillon's action ought to be interpreted, it is obvious that his efforts to have his men join in the strike were not enthusiastic or energetic. This is hardly surprising, however, in light of his previous attitude toward the strike. His observation that "there is no possible chance for success" of the strike, whatever element of realism it may have contained, could scarcely have been intended as encouragement to the men already on strike, or to others who might have been considering joining the strike.

Meantime, the proposed merger of the independent unions was dealt a severe blow, when Frankenstein announced that a majority of the A.I.W.A. delegates had voted to withdraw their organization from the December 21 convention, at which the A.I.W.A., M.E.S.A., and A.A.W.A. were to be amalgamated.²⁶ This came as a disappointing surprise to the M.E.S.A. and the A.A.W.A. leaders. Smith charged the A.I.W.A. with deserting its men at Motor Products. Frankenstein denied the charge, saying, "Things are so uncertain right now, and there has been so much confusion over the strike at Motor Products Corporation, that our men have not had time to think about the merger."²⁷

All ten of the A.I.W.A.'s Motor Products delegates had voted for amalgamation, however, and so the Motor Products local of the A.I.W.A. sent representatives to the amalgamation convention, anyway. For this action, the Motor Products local was expelled from the A.I.W.A.²⁸ Following their expulsion, most of the members of the local joined the M.E.S.A.²⁹

The December 21 convention, which was held in the Fort Wayne Hotel, was not empowered to complete the merger. After working out the preliminaries, the convention adjourned, leaving the task of completing the constitution to an executive committee. A final meeting, at which the merger was to have been completed, was scheduled for February 2, 1936. Woody and Smith were re-

elected president and secretary respectively, while Arthur Greer, president of the A.A.W.A. local at the Hudson Motor Car Company, replaced Frankenstein as treasurer.³⁰

The scheduled merger of the M.E.S.A. and A.A.W.A. never took place, however. The M.E.S.A.'s National Administrative Committee rejected the plan, the opposition coming from the Cleveland delegates who were disappointed at the A.I.W.A.'s withdrawal and who were unwilling to surrender the M.E.S.A.'s name "for a few hundred Associated members who would join the merger."³¹ The M.E.S.A. extended, as a formality, an invitation to the A.A.W.A. to become part of the Society, but the offer was declined.³²

By the end of December, there appeared to be little hope for a successful conclusion of the strike. The strikers were reported to have whittled their demands to simply that the company re-hire all those who were on the payroll prior to the strike.³³

Through the efforts of Dr. I. W. Ruskin, a citizens' committee was formed to carry the suggested settlement terms to the company on behalf of the strikers.³⁴ In view of the fact that, as early as December 4, company officials had announced that the plant was back at full production, it occasioned little surprise when they declined to meet with the citizens' committee, explaining that they did not "feel any benefit would be derived from a further discussion of the points at issue with any committee."³⁵ W.V. Heimel added that

We are running our place with 3100 satisfied workers and we have all the workers we need at present. As far as we are concerned, the strike is over..... We had 3500 employees when the strike began, and now we have 3100 working. Of this group, I know that not more than 300 are new employees. This is the answer to any charges we have thousands of employees out on strike.³⁶

Despite the apparent hopelessness for its success, the strikers somehow maintained a semblance of a strike for four more months. These months were bitterly disheartening, and, for the most part, they were monotonously uneventful. On March 2, the Common Council held a hearing at which the strikers asked for an investigation of the Dawn Patrol, a private police service employed by Motor Products Corporation. The strikers charged the agency with hurling gas bombs into their homes and otherwise trying to intimidate them.³⁷

By the first week in March, both Smith and Daylor conceded that the strikers were ready to return to work without any "terms." Daylor even offered to "allow the Motor Products management to exclude strike leaders from the men they put back to work, if they will only return the great masses of men to their jobs."³⁸

In a final effort to reach some kind of agreement with the

company, the strike committee requested that the Common Council act as mediator in the strike and suggested that negotiations be opened on these terms: (1) that all strikers be allowed to return to work, (2) that wage rates in effect at the time the dispute began be the wage rates on which work is resumed, and (3) that these terms be used as a basis for opening negotiations.³⁹ The Council, however, declined to accept the role of mediator, and this hope of effecting a settlement also vanished.⁴⁰

It was painfully obvious now that the strike was a complete failure. The plant had been operating at nearly full production for weeks, and there seemed to be no hope for even opening negotiations with the company. The strikers were thoroughly disillusioned, and the M.E.S.A.'s funds were exhausted.

Meanwhile, Homer Martin and his followers, who had been opposing Dillon for control of the U.A.W., had been swept into power at the U.A.W.'s South Bend convention. The executive board of the U.A.W. immediately extended invitations to the independent unions to affiliate. After lengthy consideration, the M.E.S.A.'s National Administrative Committee declined the affiliation proposal, declaring that "inasmuch as your [U.A.W.'s] charter does not give you jurisdiction over skilled workers, it would be unethical for us to join with you on such an uncertain basis."⁴¹

Despite its official refusal to merge, the M.E.S.A., nevertheless, was to lose a large portion of its Detroit membership to the rejuvenated U.A.W. On April 4, the thoroughly disillusioned production workers at Motor Products, who since their expulsion from the A.I.W.A., had been affiliated with the M.E.S.A., voted overwhelmingly to secede from the M.E.S.A. and join the U.A.W.⁴² In effect, as far as the M.E.S.A. was concerned, this ended the Motor Products strike, although the tool and die makers at the plant, all of whom had remained in the M.E.S.A., technically held out until the end of May.⁴³

On May 27, the M.E.S.A. declared the strike officially over.⁴⁴ That same day, the union announced the dissolution of M.E.S.A. Locals 8 and 9.⁴⁵ A few days later, Local 7 also withdrew from the M.E.S.A.⁴⁶

Thus the failure of the Motor Products strike was capped with the loss of half of the M.E.S.A.'s six Detroit locals. Local 7, which was John Anderson's local, and which had contained the Motor Products workers, became Local 155 of the U.A.W., with Anderson as president. Local 9, composed chiefly of Fisher Body workers, also voted to affiliate with the U.A.W., and with part of Local 8, became U.A.W. Local 157.

The cleavage within the M.E.S.A. was not clear cut and is difficult to describe in detail. Some of the shops within the seced-

ing locals did not leave the M.E.S.A., but became affiliated with one of the remaining M.E.S.A. locals. On the other hand, a few of the shops in the non-seceding locals, acting individually, voted to join the U.A.W. For this reason, the actual loss in membership is not easy to determine. At the time, Matt Smith minimized the extent of the loss, claiming for one thing, that most of the members of Local 7 transferred to Local 6, before it joined the U.A.W.⁴⁷ He also argued, since this split involved the almost complete withdrawal of the Communists from the M.E.S.A., that, in the long run, it would prove beneficial to the union. As he put it, "We couldn't get along with the Communists, we'll see if Homer Martin can."⁴⁸

The causes of this division in the M.E.S.A. were many. In one respect, it was the culmination of the earlier split between the Progressive faction and the union's national officials. Partly too, it was a result of the remarkable appeal which Homer Martin's reinvigorated U.A.W. had for workers in the auto industry. But certainly a most important factor was the crushing defeat which the M.E.S.A. received in the Motor Products strike. The union's treasury was in such distress that the M.E.S.A. was forced to stop publishing the Voice, just at the time the U.A.W. was launching its tremendous organizing drive. This disastrous strike also weakened the union's reputation among workers in the auto industry. The disappointed and disillusioned strikers, and all those who sympathized with them, were doubly impressed with the attractive promises of the U.A.W.'s organizers. But whatever the comparative weight of these factors, the end of the Motor Products strike found the M.E.S.A.'s prospects in Detroit waning.

NOTES

1. Interview with Matthew Smith, March 11, 1950.
2. Ibid.
3. Detroit News, November 16, 1935.
4. Ibid., November 19, 1935.
5. Ibid., November 20, 1935.
6. Ibid., November 21, 1935.
7. Ibid., November 25, 1935.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., December 4, 1935.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Detroit Times, December 5, 1935.
16. Detroit News, December 6, 1935.
17. Ibid., December 1, 1935.
18. Detroit Free Press, December 4, 1935.
19. Detroit News, December 6, 1935.
20. Ibid., December 17, 1935.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., December 19, 1935.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Daily Worker, December 21, 1935.
26. Detroit News, December 16, 1935.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., December 23, 1935
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., January 27, 1936.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., December 30, 1935.
34. Ibid. The committee was headed by Abner E. Larned, State director of the National Emergency Council, and included Bishop Edgar Blake, of the Detroit Methodist Episcopal Area; Rabbi Leon Fram, of Temple Beth El; Rev. E. Shurley Johnson, associate pastor of the Central M. E. Church; William P. Lovett, executive secretary of the Detroit Citizens League, and Douglas A. Graham, attorney for the Detroit Council of Churches.
35. Detroit News, December 31, 1935.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., March 2, 1936.
38. Ibid., March 5, 1936. The strikers, at a meeting the next day, however, voted not to allow their leaders to "sacrifice themselves" if the rest of the men were returned to their jobs.—Ibid., March 6, 1936.
39. Ibid., March 9, 1936.
40. Ibid., March 11, 1936.
41. Letter from M.E.S.A. National Policy Committee to Homer Martin and Wyndam Mortimer, May 25, 1936. (MS in possession of Mr. Joe Brown.)
42. Detroit News, April 2, 1936.
43. According to Miss Elizabeth McCracken, who has been Matthew Smith's personal secretary since 1934 and whose father was an early M.E.S.A. official, not a single one of the striking tool and die men was ever reemployed at the Motor Products Corporation,—Interview with Miss Elizabeth McCracken, February 11, 1949.
44. Detroit News, May 27, 1936.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., June 1, 1936.
47. Ibid.
48. Interview with Joe Brown, November 5, 1949. It is interesting to note that the M.E.S.A., since 1936, has been remarkably free of factional quarrels. The U.A.W., in contrast, soon became torn by bitter internal disputes, which it is still in the process of resolving.

CHAPTER VII

THE KELVINATOR STRIKE

Throughout 1936, the fortune of the M.E.S.A.'s Detroit locals had been on the decline. But early in 1937, the union again took the offensive and making use of the not yet outlawed sitdown technique struck at the Kelvinator Corporation, 14250 Plymouth Road. This strike, which was probably the most successful in the M.E.S.A.'s history, converted the Kelvinator plant, with its 2500 workers, into an M.E.S.A. stronghold and dispelled permanently any doubt as to the union's continuance in Detroit.

The strike began on February 2, 1937, after the Kelvinator Corporation refused to negotiate the union's demands for a ten cent an hour wage increase, a minimum wage of seventy-five cents an hour for men and sixty-five cents an hour for women, abolition of the piece work system, and a forty hour week, with time and a half for work in excess of forty hours.¹ It was the union's plan to have only a skeleton crew, about one hundred fifty men, actually remain in the plant and take possession of it. The rest of the workers either remained at home or engaged in picketing outside the plant. The plant cafeteria, which was a concession, agreed to provide meals for the men who remained in the plant, with expenses guaranteed by the union. It was also reported that an orchestra had been organized for the strikers' entertainment.²

The company refused to negotiate the dispute. H. L. Perkins, Kelvinator employment manager, pointed out that the company was already paying above the average wage rates for the industry. He also charged that the strike was precipitated by a small minority of the company's employees, estimating the union membership in the plant at two hundred eighty-five.³ Smith claimed that 72 per cent of the plant's employees were M.E.S.A. members, and offered to allow a disinterested person to check the union's membership roll against the plant payroll, or to have a plant election held under the supervision of the N. L. R. B. to prove his contention.⁴

When Kelvinator officials refused to meet with the strike committee, the union threatened to call strikes in the Grand Rapids Division plant, and the Detroit service plant, at 2051 Fort

Street. The threat was supported when, after a mass meeting, the employees of the service plant, which handles repair and service work for the entire country, sent a telegram to the Kelvinator Corporation, stating:

We declare our sympathy with the strikers at the Plymouth Road plant and strongly urge the company to open negotiations with the M.E.S.A. immediately. Otherwise we will be compelled to hold another meeting to consider definite action.⁵

The only violence in the strike grew out of an alleged attempt on the part of the company to use private detectives as strike breakers. According to William Cooper, chairman of the strike committee, the company asked permission to send fire insurance inspectors into the plant. At first, ten men were assigned to the job, but then the number of inspectors was increased to sixty-five, part of whom were to be assigned to each eight hour period. The strikers became suspicious and searched some of the newcomers. A number of the "inspectors" were found to be carrying black-jacks, and four of them had guns.⁶ In addition, it was discovered that several of them were carrying badges which had been issued to retired Detroit policemen, and others possessed cards which had apparently been issued to special deputies by Sheriff Thomas C. Wilcox. Upon making these discoveries, the men in the plant proceeded to eject bodily all of the "inspectors," with a number of fights breaking out in the process. Fifty-five policemen were rushed to the plant to quell the disorder.⁸

When Sheriff Wilcox was asked about the cards bearing his signature, which were found on the inspectors, he stated:

I remember swearing a number of men recently for the Kelvinator people. I was told they were regular plant guards, and not men brought in because of the strike.

I am opposed to strike-breakers and have repeatedly refused to swear in men to be used for strike duty. Sunday a local detective agency asked me to swear in 75 men for strike duty. I refused. If these men were brought in because of the strike I did not know it, or I would not have sworn them in.⁹

To prevent the entrance of any more "inspectors," the strikers proceeded to jam shut the revolving doors of the administration building, and stationed a guard inside each door. So effectively were the entrances closed that, the next day, executives and office workers were prevented from entering. It was stated in the Detroit News that the doors had been welded shut.¹⁰ A reporter for the Detroit Times was allowed to enter the plant, however, and he found that the revolving doors had been merely jammed with chairs.¹¹

An indication of the extraordinary efficiency with which the strike was conducted is revealed in the same reporter's description of what was going on inside the plant:

...strict military discipline prevails. A former United States Marine sergeant, Orville Plake, is in complete charge and is assisted by James Clear. A stentorian voiced striker awakens the men at 5 A.M. For the next half hour they have army setting up exercises. Breakfast is served at 6 A.M.

The men then stand watch of two hours on and eight hours off. Their duty is to patrol the plant, watch for fires and violations of strike rules. These rules include the prohibition of smoking in the parts of the plant where smoking was not permitted before the strike, property destruction, and littering the floor. No striker may have any sort of a weapon.

On the second floor in the recreation room a court has been set up for violators of these rules. Plake is the judge and there is a prosecutor, a defense attorney and a jury of 14. Commonest penalty - that for smoking - is sitting eight hours on a backless bench.

Romeo, once a downtown chef, is in charge of the kitchen. Yesterday, he turned out bacon and eggs for breakfast, chop suey for lunch and spaghetti and meat balls for dinner.

A laundry known as the "Sing Too Laundry" has been established in a second floor washroom...¹²

On February 10, William Cooper, head of the strike committee, announced that he had received a telegram from the company's personnel director asking him to attend a bargaining conference. Since the request included a provision that Matthew Smith be excluded from the meeting, Cooper refused to attend.¹³

So effective had the strike become that the company, in seeking an injunction against the strikers, complained disparagingly that

...Entrance has been forcibly prevented to office workers and executives. The office building is now in a state of siege. A complete cessation of activities has resulted through this illegal occupancy. Five hundred office workers and 2500 factory workers are unable to work. Eight and a half million dollars of collateral paper is in possession of sit-downers. Personal papers and letters of executives, the safe containing cash, confidential records of all kinds are in possession of these 71 illegal occupants.

Records indicating the part payment of over 100,000 users of refrigerators, involving title to them, are in these offices...¹⁴

The Kelvinator Corporation was willing to negotiate with its employees but was "unwilling to accept a man [Smith] and a group

which in its opinion ought not to be spokesman for 2500 workers."¹⁵ Smith replied by denouncing the company's refusal to bargain with M.E.S.A. officials and again challenged the company to hold an election. He pointed out that the reason only a few men remained in the plant was "because of the inadvisability of feeding and maintaining sanitary conditions for so many..." and explained further that "the occupation of the office was precipitated by the company hiring 131 armed thugs, and that is the only reason the administration building was occupied."¹⁶

Meantime, Kelvinator officials were forced to set up temporary offices outside the main plant, in order to dispatch checks to employees in other parts of the country.¹⁷ The pressure on the distraught company became well-nigh intolerable when, next day, the strike spread to the Fort Street service plant. A picket line established outside this plant successfully prevented employees from entering the premises.¹⁸

At this point the company yielded, and agreed to negotiate with M.E.S.A. officials. Negotiations were carried on in the Dime Building, in the office of Alex J. Grosbeck, who acted as the bargaining agent for the Corporation. The union representatives were Smith and Maurice Sugar. After several conferences, a settlement was reached. The final agreement was a notable victory for the union. It provided:

1. That wage raises of 5 to 7 1/2 cents an hour be granted.
2. That a minimum wage of 75 cents per hour be established for men workers, except in certain unskilled classes, where men shall be hired at 65 cents and raised to a minimum of 70 cents after 30 days.
3. That work be resumed immediately in both the main and the service plant.
4. That all remaining differences between the company and the union be negotiated.¹⁹

Thus, in exactly two weeks, the strike was ended. It had been a brilliant triumph for the union, and was possibly one of the most successful strikes ever conducted anywhere. By their forceful leadership, the M.E.S.A.'s officials demonstrated impressively that they intended to stay in business in Detroit. The Kelvinator plant quickly became known as a "tight" union shop, intensely loyal to the M.E.S.A., and to this day, the Kelvinator workers have remained the chief buttress of the M.E.S.A. in Detroit.

NOTES

1. Detroit News, February 2, 1937.
2. Ibid., February 3, 1937.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., February 2, 1937.
5. Ibid., February 6, 1937.
6. Detroit Times, February 9, 1937.
7. Detroit News, February 9, 1937.
8. Detroit Times, February 9, 1937.
9. Ibid.
10. Detroit News, February 9, 1937.
11. Detroit Times, February 9, 1937.
12. Ibid.
13. Detroit Free Press, February 10, 1937.
14. Detroit News, February 11, 1937.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., February 12, 1937.
17. Detroit Free Press, February 13, 1937.
18. Ibid.
19. Detroit Times, February 16, 1937.

LOCAL #72
MECHANICS EDUCATIONAL
SOCIETY OF AMERICA (MESA)

CHAPTER VIII

"A STAR OR A COMET"

With the successful conclusion of the Kelvinator strike, the crisis was past in the M.E.S.A.'s evolution in Detroit. Since that strike, the union has never again been concerned with the problem of survival. Henceforth, the M.E.S.A.'s history has been one of unspectacular but steady growth. While this account has been concerned primarily with the union's development in Detroit, it should be noted that branches of the union outside Detroit have also prospered, especially in Toledo and Cleveland. The National Office has remained in Detroit, however, and of a total dues-paying membership of 67,000, 9200 are in the Detroit area.¹

A history of the M.E.S.A. would not be complete, however, without mention of the extraordinary role of Mr. Matthew Smith. Mr. Smith, who has been chosen National Secretary in every election since the first in January, 1934, is the key figure in the union.² He has made the office of National Secretary by far the most important post in the union; and, of course, the fact that he has held that position since it was created has given him a chance to influence the destiny of the union to a degree that no other individual could have under the democratic character of its charter.

Mr. Smith's power in union affairs is not simply or briefly explainable. While under the 1934 Constitution the General Secretary was delegated important responsibilities, they were certainly not of a scope which would give the holder of that office a dominating position in the union.³

The explanation of this National Secretary's influence in the M.E.S.A. must be made largely in terms of his personal characteristics. He is aggressive, capable, extremely class conscious, and possessed of a tremendous energy which he earnestly devotes to union affairs. As National Secretary, Mr. Smith has from the beginning been responsible for the M.E.S.A.'s finances and records; but also, almost from the beginning, gradually he became the chief negotiator for the union, the leading editorial writer for the Voice and the Educator, and the union's spokesman at hearings before various government boards and agencies.

With such skill and intensity did Mr. Smith carry out these assumed responsibilities that they were eventually included among

his official duties. The extent to which Mr. Smith's influence in union affairs had grown is recognized officially in the revision of the Constitution and By-Laws, August 8, 1943. His duties under the revision should be compared with those in the original Constitution (see Section 2, Article XV, in Appendix B). Under Article VI, the revised Constitution provides:

Section 2. (National Secretary) The National Secretary shall be the Secretary and keep correct records of all N.A.C. meetings, all decisions of the N.A.C. to be kept in writing and copies forwarded to all local offices and Secretaries, shall keep a correct record of all Conventions of the National Body and shall conduct all correspondence in the name of the National Body and be subject to the directions of the N.A.C. He shall have the general supervision of his office and upon request shall submit his books of account, together with all papers, files, and documents in his possession for the inspection of the N.A.C. and a duly elected auditing committee who may obtain the services of an outside auditor.

The National Secretary shall be the co-ordinator-in-chief of the organization. He shall be eminently conversant and familiar with the rules, regulations, directives, and orders of the various governmental agencies and bureaus affecting labor. He shall attend and represent the organization at meetings, hearings, and panels before any of the various government agencies and bureaus. It shall be his further duty and responsibility, upon request of any local or group of members, to negotiate and execute contracts and agreements for and in behalf of the organization, affecting hours, wages and conditions of employment of its members, subject, however to their approval.

The National Secretary shall receive all funds paid to the National Body from all sources and distribute same to the credit of the accounts for which they are intended. He shall keep a systematically arranged book account between the National Body and each local. He shall issue monthly an itemized account of receipts and expenditures and a monthly review showing in detail all financial transactions between the National Body and locals. He shall, upon request of any local, furnish a copy of the expense account of any paid representative of the National Body for the period specified by the local, provided such request does not include a period prior to the next preceding audit.

The National Secretary acting upon instructions of the N.A.C. shall cause to be audited the books of any local or district whenever the N.A.C. desires such an audit. The National Secretary shall employ for the purpose of such audit

an outside auditor, acting upon the instructions of the N.A.C. The officials of any local or district shall forthwith submit to the National Secretary or to an auditor whom he may designate, all books, vouchers, bills, receipts, and records of such local or district; any local or district officer who refuses to comply with the provisions of this section shall be liable to suspension or expulsion by the N.A.C.

The National Secretary shall deposit daily all monies in a bank of sound financial standing, in the name of the M.E.S.A. and shall furnish the National Treasurer with a copy of the deposit slips and get a receipt for same from the National Treasurer, which deposits shall be subject to withdrawal by checks, signed by the National Secretary and countersigned by the National Treasurer.

Even a cursory reading of this article reveals the tremendous authority with which the National Secretary is now officially invested. Since Mr. Smith is the only man who has ever been National Secretary, the delegation of such authority to him is indicative of the esteem in which he is held by his fellow members in the union. It should be emphasized, however, that his authority, and that of every other individual in the union, is subordinate to the authority of the National Administrative Committee, and neither he nor any other paid official of the M.E.S.A. has a vote in that committee. When differences arise between Mr. Smith and the N.A.C., and they do, it is the position or opinion of the N.A.C. which prevails. Furthermore, Mr. Smith does not have the power to suspend or penalize any member of the union, although he himself can be suspended by the N.A.C. for cause.

During the war, under Mr. Smith's leadership, the M.E.S.A. twice gained the national lime-light. The first instance was in October, 1942, when, as a result of his initiative, the Confederated Unions of America was formed. This organization was an amalgamation of a multitude of independent unions, whose total combined membership was in excess of 300,000.⁴

The avowed purpose of the merger was to get representation for the independent unions on the War Labor Board, War Manpower Commission, War Production Board, or any other government agency in which labor had a stake.⁵ Mr. Smith was elected president of the organization, and Don Cameron of the Associated Unions of America was elected secretary-treasurer. This new organization, which was to be governed by an Executive Board strikingly similar to the M.E.S.A.'s National Administrative Committee, was financed by a two cents per member assessment against the member unions.⁶ While the C.U.A. did not succeed in getting representation on the War Labor Board or the other government agencies, it did gain concessions from the W.L.B.

which might not have been obtained by separate action of the various independent unions.⁷ The merger was one of war-time expediency, however, and in September, 1945, the M.E.S.A. withdrew from the C.U.A.

The M.E.S.A. again attracted national attention, when in February, 1944, a strike of M.E.S.A. members closed fifty-one war plants in Michigan and Ohio. The union had refused to make a "no strike for the duration" pledge, claiming that such a pledge would be a fundamental violation of its charter.⁸ Mr. Smith was immediately summoned to Washington to be duly chastised by the War Labor Board. He took the offensive, however, and proceeded to lecture the W.L.B. on the injustice of not giving the independent unions representation on any of the war-time agencies dealing with labor. So effectively did he present his case, that he is considered to have won a major victory in Washington.⁹

Matthew Smith's unusual abilities as a labor leader so impressed Walter Davenport, staff writer for Colliers, that he used Smith as the subject of a feature article entitled, "Unique Unioneer." Davenport thought Smith "smooth, energetic, and articulate" and declared:

Here's a labor leader who opposes the closed shop, the check-off and practically everything that makes labor leaders fat, famous and powerful. Matthew Smith, in short, believes that unions should belong to labor - an idea causing some concern in established union circles. . . .

While the War Labor Board would like to see something unpleasantly permanent happen to Mr. Smith, the White House considers him neither a menace nor a nuisance. Without knowing whether Mr. Smith is a star or a comet, here to stay or gone tomorrow, Mr. Roosevelt's observers recall the day when the President, harrassed by both the A.F. of L. and C.I.O., called down "a plague on both your houses." They think that Mr. Smith might conceivably become that plague. . . .¹⁰

Mr. Smith, who is willing to talk about anything except himself, was born in Oldham, England, in 1893, and lived in England until 1926, when he and his wife moved to Canada.¹¹ He came to the United States in 1928. Since becoming active in the union, however, he has refused to take any further steps toward becoming a citizen, because he will not give his enemies "the satisfaction of badgering him into it."¹² This is characteristic of his militancy, which, he admits, sometimes borders on downright stubbornness.

Thus, the M.E.S.A. under Matthew Smith's guidance has remained an aggressively active organization and has become an increasingly successful one. Since 1937, the membership of the union has increased steadily and is continuing to increase at the

rate of about 2 per cent each year. Critics may argue that as the union grows larger it may, in order to maintain its efficiency, have to gradually surrender its democratic character, and that, if it would ever become as large as either the A.F. of L. or the C.I.O., it would have to adopt a different administrative set-up. There can be, obviously, no definitive answer to such an argument. As long as the National Administrative Committee is the final authority in the union, however, and as long as that Committee is composed of rank and file workers, who draw no salary from the union, the M.E.S.A. is unlikely to become controlled by a centralized bureaucratic machine. Regardless of changes which may or may not be made, it seems reasonable to conclude that the union is a permanent force in the field of labor organization. Whether or not the M.E.S.A. becomes a decisive force in that field, or even remains an unique one, the history of the Society indicates that its course will be worthy of the attention of students of contemporary history.

NOTES

1. Interview with Matthew Smith, November 19, 1949.
2. Election of national officers was held annually from 1934 to 1944. Since December, 1945, however, they have been elected to two-year terms and elections have been held bi-annually. In addition, as of December, 1949, national officers are elected by the members of the National Administrative Committee. Prior to that date, they had been elected by vote of the entire rank and file membership - the change being made to prevent the election of "name" candidates. — Interview with Miss Elizabeth McCracken, July 7, 1950.
3. See Appendix B for a complete transcript of the duties of the National Secretary under the 1934 Constitution.
4. "C.I.U. to C.U.A.," Business Week, October 10, 1942, p. 86. In addition to the M.E.S.A., the major independent unions involved in the merger were the Associated Unions of America, the United Brotherhood of Welders, Cutters, and Helpers, and the Association of Communication Equipment Workers. — Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 88.
6. Ibid.
7. For one thing, requests for increases in wage rates (on which ceilings had been established) were much more readily granted by the W.L.B. after the formation of the C.U.A. — Interview with Miss Elizabeth McCracken, July 7, 1950.

8. Under the M.E.S.A. charter, it is impossible for a shop to call a "wildcat" or "unauthorized" strike as long as the proper procedure for calling the strike is followed, which requires that 60 per cent of the members present and voting at a meeting called to take a strike vote vote in favor of striking. Nor can the strike be called off until a majority of the men on strike vote to end it. Thus, technically, only the men actually employed in a given shop or factory can decide whether or not to strike. — Interview with Matthew Smith, March 11, 1950.

9. See especially the following articles: "Another Lewis?" Business Week, February 12, 1944, pp. 99-101; "Mr. Smith Won't Go," Newsweek, XXIII (February 14, 1944), 67; "Turbulent Mr. Smith," Newsweek, XXIII (February 21, 1944), 66-67.

10. Walter Davenport, "Unique Unioneer," Colliers, CXIII (May 13, 1944), 14.

11. Detroit News, April 14, 1934.

12. Davenport, op. cit., p. 57.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF DATA REGARDING WAGES OF TOOL AND DIE MAKERS IN DETROIT

From Exhibit 17, Appendix B, Preliminary Report on the Study of Regularization of Employment and Improvement of Labor Conditions in the Automobile Industry. Washington: N.R.A. Research and Planning Division, January 23, 1935.

Based on 105 questionnaires:

AGE

Maximum: 62 years Minimum: 21 years Median: 39.5 years

EXPERIENCE

Maximum: 40 years Minimum: 2 years Median: 20 years

AVERAGE YEARLY INCOME

1929.....	\$2433.
1930.....	\$1650.
1931.....	\$1070.
1932.....	\$ 740.
1933.....	\$ 636.
1934.....	\$1020.

APPENDIX B

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS of the Mechanics Educational Society of America

Revised and adopted

at the

Convention in Detroit

May 24 - 25 - 26 - 27

1934

Sanctioned by the local delegates

at Interstate Meeting

July 28, 1934

Preamble

We, the Mechanics' Educational Society of America, this day and date assembled in convention, in order to secure and defend our rights, advance our interests as workers, create an authority whose seal shall constitute a certificate of character, intelligence and skill, build up an organization where all members can participate in the discussion and deliberation of those practical problems upon the solution of which depends our welfare and prosperity, to encourage the principle and practice of conciliation and arbitration in the adjustment of all differences between labor and capital, establish order, insure harmony, promote the general cause of humanity and brotherly love, and secure the blessings of friendship, equality and truth, do ordain and establish this Constitution and these Laws for the government of this Society.

ARTICLE I

Section 1. (Name of Society) This organization shall be known as the Mechanics' Educational Society of America.

Section 2. (Purpose) To promote good fellowship, cement the bonds of friendship and to promote the general welfare of this organization to aid and assist its members in bettering their social and economic position in life.

ARTICLE II

Section 1. (Membership) All persons whose normal occupation is in the manufacture or repair of tools, dies, jigs, fixtures and machinery shall be eligible for membership in number 1 section of this Society.

Section 1A. Only persons working in or about machine production or assembly shall be eligible for membership in Section 2 of this Society.

ARTICLE III

Section 1. (Officers) The officers of each local, district, state or interstate committee shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Sergeant-at-Arms, who shall perform the duties pertaining to their respective offices. Two assistants, one Financial, one Recording, may be elected to aid the Secretary.

Section 2. (Trustees) Five members in good standing and residential stability shall be elected by each local, district, state and general membership meeting, to serve as Trustees to the respective committees, whose duties shall be to pass on all expenditures.

Section 3. All local officers are subject to recall at any time by preferring charges to the Executive Committee of the local, same to be brought before members of the local involved.

ARTICLE IV

Section 1. (District Committee) The District Committee shall be elected from locals in district plus equal representation from district shop stewards committee.

Section 1A. All members of District Committees can be recalled by charges being preferred to the Executive Committee of their local, same charges to be brought before body electing them.

Section 1B. All District Committee members shall make a report to the Executive Committee of their local at their first meeting following the District Committee meeting.

Section 2. (State Committee) The State Committee shall consist of members elected from various locals in state. Two delegates per thousand members or major fraction thereof. Each local with a minimum of fifty members shall be represented by at least two delegates elected at a local membership meeting. Each local with a membership up to 1,500 shall be entitled to two delegates and one more for each additional thousand members.

Section 2A. All state officers can be recalled by charges being preferred to the Executive Committee electing them, same charges being brought before body electing them.

Section 3. (Interstate Committee) The Interstate Committee until the next convention shall be made up of one delegate elected from each local in the M.E.S.A., whose duties shall be to act in all cases where a final decision of any dispute is sought and to interpret and to enforce Constitution and By-laws of the M.E.S.A. They shall meet at least once a month and shall be subject to call by the National President at any time.

Section 3A. The members of the Interstate Committee can be recalled by preferring charges to the Executive Committee of the local in which he is a member, same charges to be brought before the local.

Section 3B. Seven members of the Interstate Committee shall constitute a quorum.

Section 3C. All decisions of the Interstate Committee shall be made in writing by the General Secretary and forwarded to all locals and District Committees.

Section 4. (Executive Committee) The Executive Committee of the locals shall be eleven members elected by ballot by members of locals.

Section 4A. A quorum of the local Executive [Committee] shall be seven members.

Section 5. In cities where more than one local exists the President, Secretary and Executive Committee members of all locals meet at least once monthly for the purpose of considering matters affecting the welfare of the M.E.S.A., and shall report their recommendations to their locals.

ARTICLE V

Section 1. (By-Laws) Local By-Laws can be enacted by any local provided that such local By-Laws are approved by District Committee and do not conflict with the Constitution of this Society.

Section 2. (Amendments) Amendments to local By-Laws must be read out without debate at the local meeting prior to the meeting at which they are to be submitted.

Section 3. (Transfer) A transfer form containing pertinent record of member desiring to be transferred shall be issued in triplicate, one for each local concerned, and one to the Interstate Committee. Transfers are free.

Section 3A. All transfers must be acted upon by the local in the same manner provided for applications, no member transferring to a local shall be eligible to hold office in the local until a period of thirty (30) days from date of acceptance as a member of the local.

ARTICLE VI

Section 1. Local Executive Committees shall investigate all charges preferred against any member. The local Executive Committee (board) shall then act as a Trial Board and recommend dismissal of case or penalties to the next local membership meeting. Sixty percent vote (of members present and voting) is necessary for fine, suspension or expulsion of member.

Section 2. (Trial - Charges - Appeals) Any local by 60 per cent vote of members present and voting can fine, suspend for any period, or expel any member for conduct detrimental to the best interest of the Society. Appeals can be made against fines or suspension to District Committee whose expulsion can be made first to the District Committee and then a final appeal to the Interstate Committee.

ARTICLE VII

Section 1. (Arrears) Member falling in arrears more than three months' dues, levies, and (or) assessment shall be notified

by mail of amount of such arrears. On such arrears not being paid during ensuing 30 days, member shall be suspended for non-payment of dues.

Section 2. Members suspended for non-payment of arrears can be reinstated on payment of fine equal to twice his indebtedness at time of suspension. Mitigating circumstances shall be considered by local Executive Committee.

ARTICLE VIII

Section 1. (Shop Stewards) One Shop Steward must be elected by the members of the M.E.S.A. on each shift in each shop. Shop Steward cards must be issued by General Secretary of Shop Steward Committee.

Section 2. Shop Steward is primarily an organizer; his duties are to aid the financial secretary in collecting back dues; he is responsible to see that each member's grievances are taken to the Shop Committee. If this grievance is against the union he must report to the Shop Steward Committee. A Shop Committee should be elected in each shop to consist of at least three members. These members to be taken from Shop Stewards if there are less than three; additional members should be elected from the Shop Committee to act as representatives of shop members in a dispute.

ARTICLE IX

Section 1. A per capita tax of 23% of all dues paid shall be sent the Main Office to pay Organizers and keep a record and research department.

Section 2. A 1% per capita tax of all dues paid shall go to the District Committee for running expenses.

Section 3. A 1% per capita tax of all dues paid shall go to the State Committee for running expenses.

ARTICLE X

Section 1. General Secretary and Treasurer of each local, district, state and interstate committee shall be authorized to sign checks for payment with the approval of the respective Boards of Trustees.

ARTICLE XI

Section 1. Each local must obtain and sustain a sinking fund equal to \$10.00 per member. This fund shall be established by not less than 10% of all dues paid into it until minimum amount is reached.

ARTICLE XII

Section 1. (Initiation) Initiation fee for members of Section 1 of this Society shall be one dollar (\$1.00). When proposed mem-

ber is approved by local he shall pay one dollar (\$1.00) for current month's dues.

Section 2. The initiation fee for production Section No. 2 shall be fifty cents (\$.50). Dues shall be fifty cents (\$.50) per month.

Section 3. The two sections of this Society shall be parallel organizations and members of joint committees shall always report back recommendations to their respective sections for decisions.

Section 4. Joint committee meetings shall be arranged when deemed necessary by any parallel committee.

ARTICLE XIII

Section 1. (Forming of Locals) Ten members can form a local but cannot have representation until membership increases to fifty. When local has two thousand members (2000) another local shall be formed, an exception to this, however, will be allowed where a local consists of members all working in one shop.

ARTICLE XIV

Section 1. In the event of the possibility of a general strike in any city or district, all members in said city or district shall have the right to vote for or against strike action. This vote to be taken in local halls adjacent to shops concerned. A 60% vote in favor shall be required before strike action is taken.

Section 2. No strike to be called until men involved in any shop or local have voted for strike action, that members who are temporarily laid off be allowed to vote providing they have not been laid off for more than 30 days. Vote to be taken in local halls and not in shop concerned. A 60% vote of members present and voting in favor shall be required before strike action is taken.

[ARTICLE XV]

Election of National Officers

General President, General Vice-President, General Secretary, General Treasurer, five National Trustees, and National Organizers shall be nominated and elected by ballot vote of membership, nominations to be sent to General Office before the end of November, and ballot vote to be taken at local meetings, and all ballot papers shall be kept by locals for two months in case of a recount.

Section 1. (Duties of National Officers) The General President shall be the co-ordinator of the M.E.S.A. and controller of National Organizers. He shall provide suitable literature and shall preside at all meetings of National Officers including those

meetings when arrangements are made to send Organizers to any localities. The General President shall keep a record of his official acts and make a detailed report thereof every thirty days in circular form, which circular shall also contain such recommendations as he deems it advisable for the welfare of the organization and shall mail a copy thereof to each local. All important decisions rendered by General President shall be published concurrently in the minutes of the Interstate Committee.

Section 2. The General Secretary shall be the secretary and keep records of all meetings of the Interstate Committees and all conventions of the National Body. He shall conduct all correspondence in the name of the National Body and be subject to the direction of the Interstate Committee. He shall have the general supervision of his office and upon request shall submit his books of account together with all papers, files, and documents in his possession for the inspection of the Interstate Committee and a duly elected Auditing Committee who may obtain the services of an outside Auditor.

The General Secretary shall receive all funds paid to National Body from all sources and distribute same to the credit of the accounts for which they are intended. He shall keep a systematically arranged book account between the National Body and each local, also a newspaper subscription list. He shall issue monthly in pamphlet form an itemized account of receipts and expenditures and a monthly review showing in detail all financial transactions between the General Body and locals. He shall upon request of any local furnish a copy of the expense account of any paid representatives of the National Body, for the period specified by the local provided such request does not include a period prior to the next proceeding Audit.

The General Secretary acting upon instructions of the Interstate Committee shall cause to be audited the books of any local or district whenever the Interstate Committee desires such an audit. The General Secretary shall employ for the purposes of such audit an outside auditor upon demand therefore by the General Secretary acting upon the instructions of the Interstate Committee; the officials of any local or district shall forthwith submit to the General Secretary or to an auditor whom he may designate, all books, vouchers, bills, receipts and records of such local or district; any local or district or officer who refuses to comply with the provisions of this section shall be liable to suspension or expulsion by the Interstate Committee.

The General Secretary shall deposit daily all monies in a bank of sound financial standing, in the name of the M.E.S.A.,

which deposits shall be subject to withdrawal. Checks must be signed by the General Secretary and countersigned by the National Treasurer.

Section 3. Salary of the General President and the General Secretary shall be \$50.00 per week. Salary of the General Organizer shall be \$44.00 per week. Transportation expenses to be approved by the Interstate Committee.

Section 4. Vice-President. The Vice-President shall assume all duties pertaining to Vice-President subject to Robert's Rule of Order.

Section 5. National Treasurer. The National Treasurer shall countersign all checks issued from National Office.

Section 6. National Organizers. The National Organizers shall be subject to control by the Interstate Committee.

Section 7. All authority of the National Officers shall be subject to the supervision of the Interstate Committee.

Section 8. Recall of National Officers. The charges of malfeasance in office (illegal act or deed, theft from office) against any National Officer when approved by Board to which charges are made shall cause his immediate suspension; all other charges must be sustained before the officer is removed from office.

NATIONAL OFFICERS

General President,
J. F. CHAPMAN.
General Vice President,
J. MURDOCK.
General Secretary,
MATTHEW SMITH.
General Treasurer,
W. RUSSELL.
General Organizers,
J. J. GRIFFEN,
HARRY HARRISON,
R. E. COVERT.

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